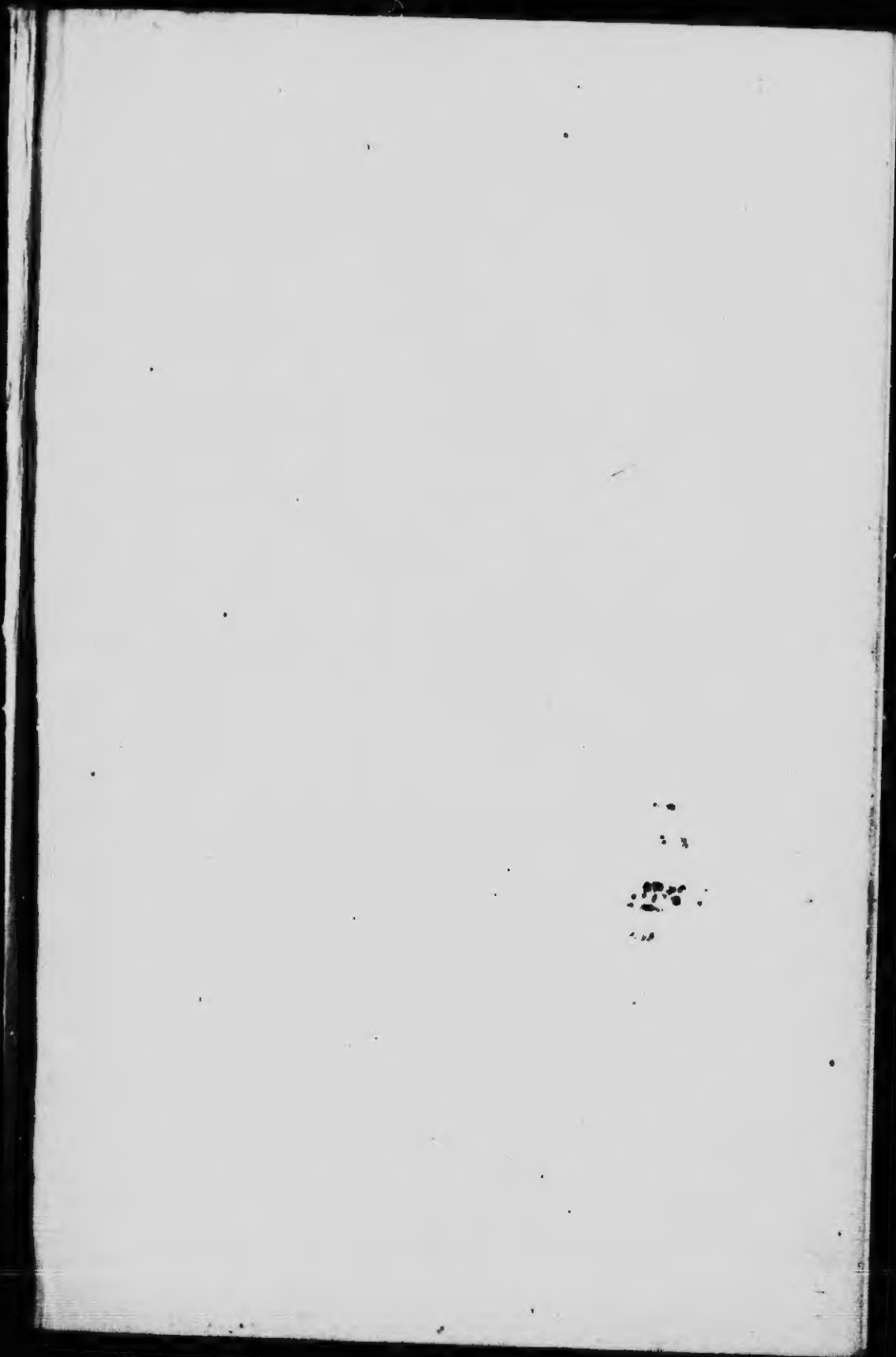
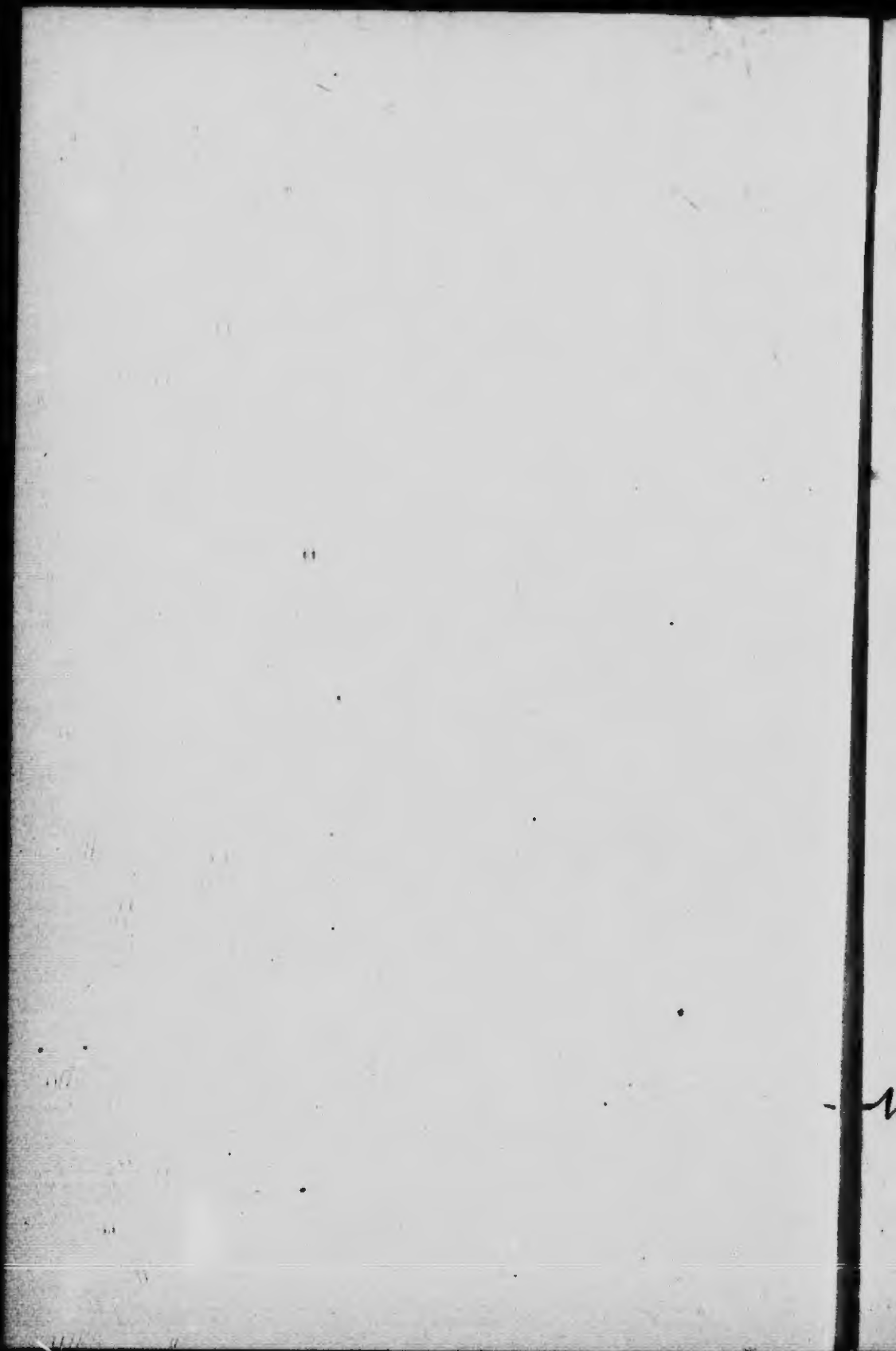




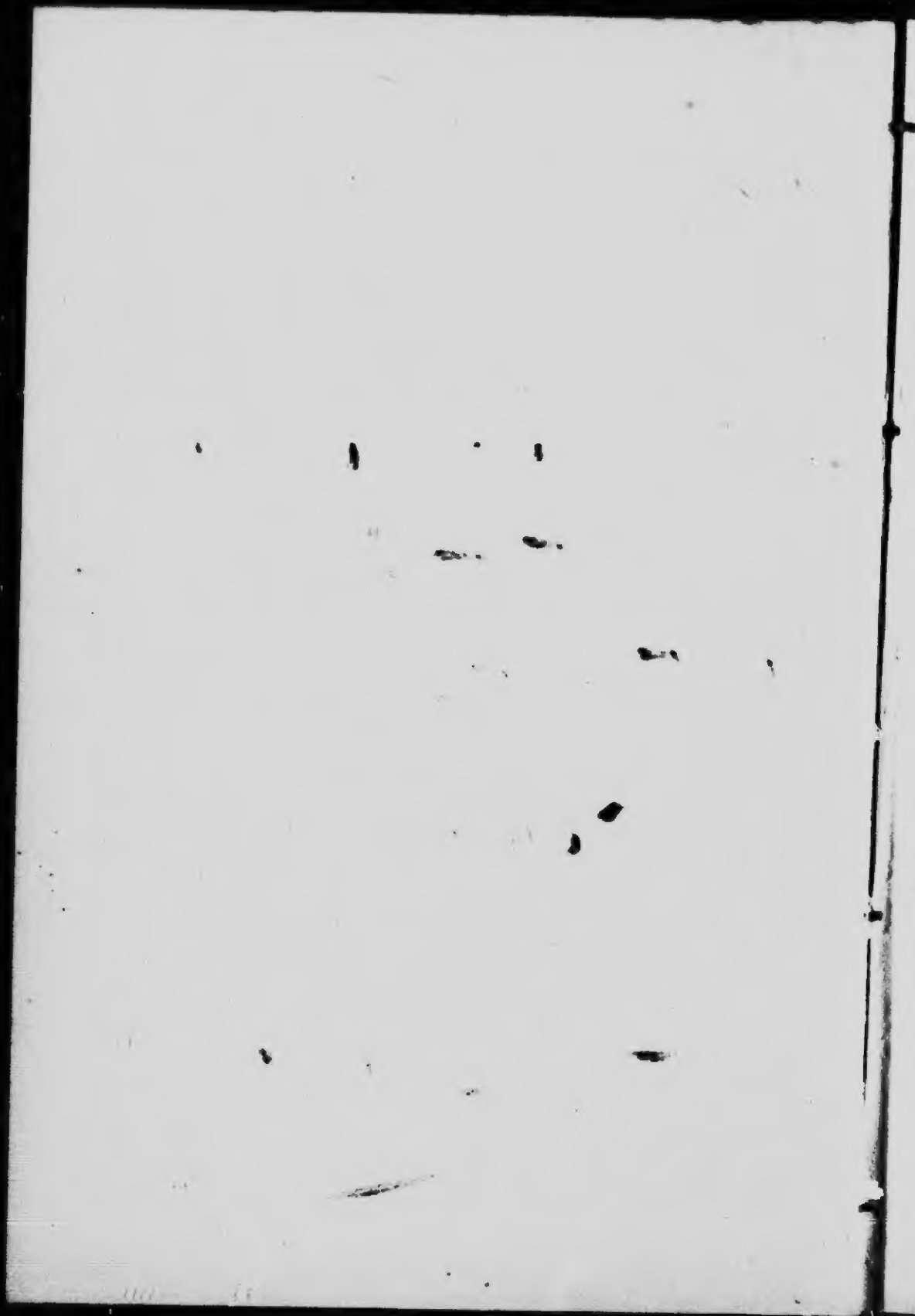




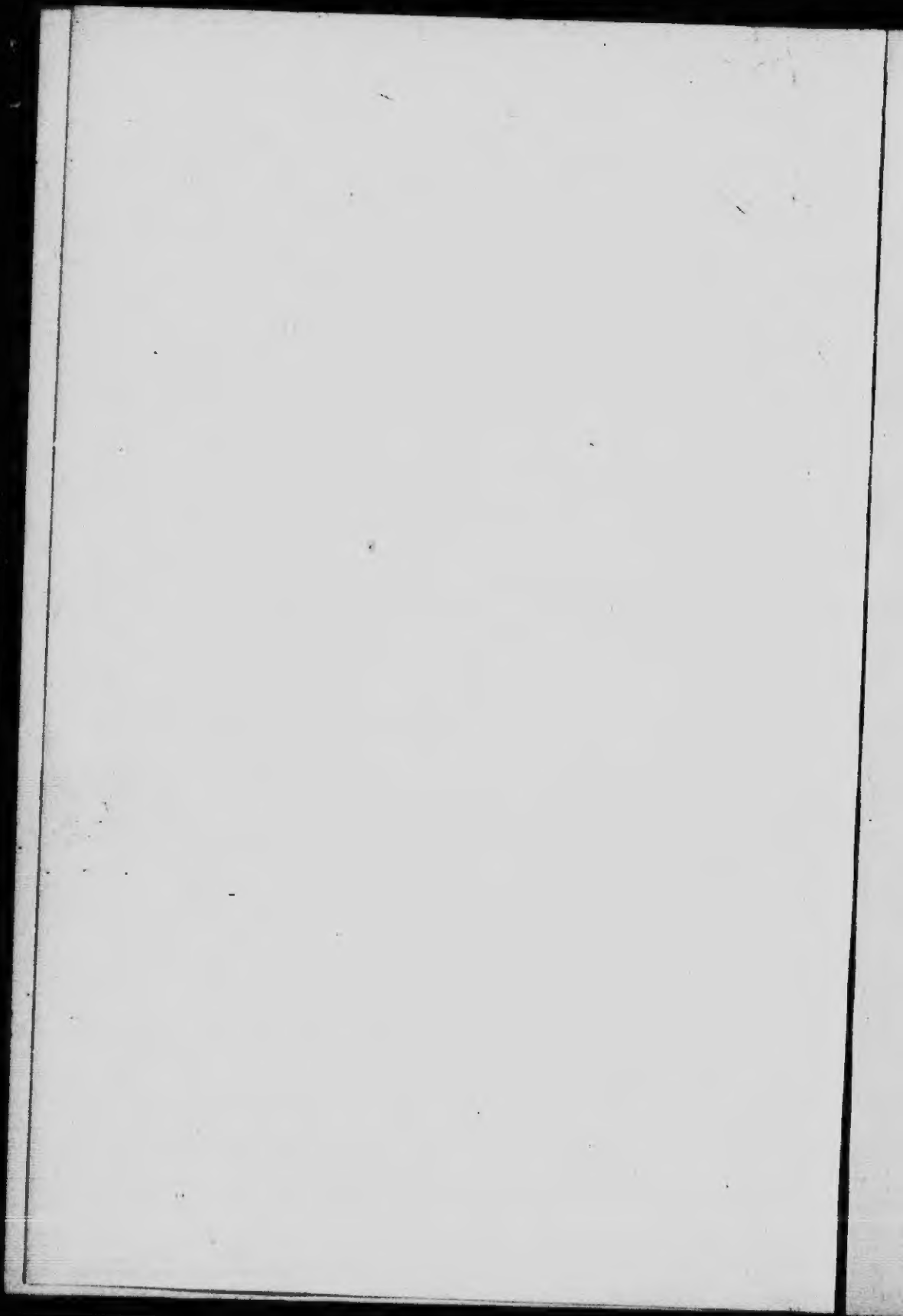
To Mr. Rock Ballard
With the compliments
of the author.

F. Clifford Smith

- Montreal May 17-1901



A DAUGHTER OF PATRICIANS





"AND RAISED HER GLOVED HANDS IN MUTE APPEAL."

[Frontispiece.]

A DAUGHTER
OF
PATRICIANS

TORONTO

PUBLISHERS' SYNDICATE LTD.

51 YONGE STREET

1904



"AND RAISED HER GLOVED HANDS IN MUTE APPEAL."

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A DAUGHTER

OF

PATRICIANS

BY

F. CLIFFORD SMITH

AUTHOR OF "A LOVER IN HOMESPUN,"
ETC.

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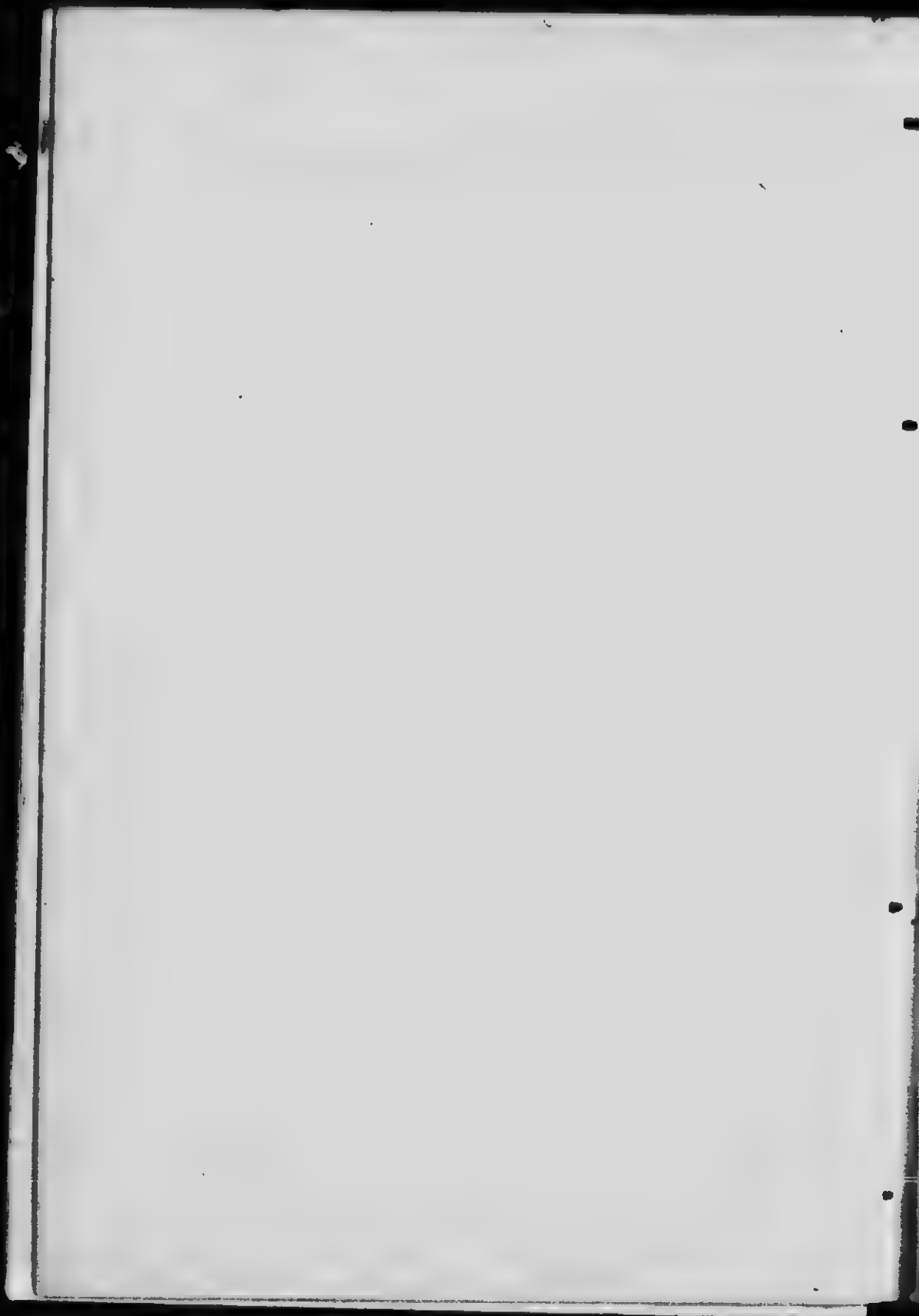
CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. A FATEFUL NIGHT	I
II. GIOVANNI CORREGGIO	14
III. FACE TO FACE	21
IV. THE SUMMER HOUSE OF MONSIEUR D'EGMONT	29
V. THE MEETING	39
VI. THE FIRST LESSON	56
VII. A BOOK OF ILL OMEN	68
VIII. A SINISTER INCIDENT	81
IX. TOLD AFTER MANY DAYS	96
X. TO LOVE'S DICTATION	119
XI. THE ORDEAL	138
XII. A WILY ANGLER	160
XIII. THE ELOPEMENT	168
XIV. CURÉ CINQ MARS	176
XV. DARKENING CLOUDS	187
XVI. ADAMANT	195
XVII. THE LAW AND THE LADY	212
XVIII. PATAUD'S LAST LEAP	232
XIX. A DIREFUL SABBATH	244

CHAP.	PAGE
XX. OBLIVION	258
XXI. THE RECKONING	270
XXII. THE REVEALING OF A CHEERFUL HOPE	280
XXIII. THE ACCUSATION	291
XXIV. THE HEALING	308

ILLUSTRATIONS

NO.		PAGE
1.	"AND RAISED HER GLOVED HANDS IN MUTE APPEAL." (Frontispiece)	231
2.	THE CHURCH OF MIRACLES, STE. ANNE DE BEAUPRÉ .	26
3.	SCALA SANTO, OR "HOLY STAIRS" .	59
4.	THE OLD CHAPEL OF MIRACLES OF 1686 .	138
5.	GREAT COLLECTION OF CRUTCHES LEFT BY THOSE PUR- PORTED TO HAVE BEEN CURED .	160
6.	FAMOUS STATUE OF STE. ANNE .	258



INTRODUCTION

THE strange French Canadian marriage law on which this novel is founded has been, peculiar as it may appear, endorsed by British Courts in the province of Quebec. It is but natural that the French-speaking portion of the population, which, it may be added, greatly outnumbers that of the English, should uphold the claim, put forth by the Catholic Church, as to its supremacy (supremacy even greater than that of the Civil Law) in all matters pertaining to the sanctioning of marriage; but, upon the other hand, it is not to be wondered at that adherents of other denominations bitterly resent such claim, and are contending that the Courts, by their mandates, have practically made the faith of the Catholic Church a State religion in the vast province of Quebec. Although this marriage law has been in existence ever since the conquest of Canada by the British, it is, for reasons shown in the novel, in reality only now becoming in some

way generally known and its far-reaching meaning understood.

As it is quite a frequent thing for the daily press in Canada to give the names of persons who have been cured of diseases, considered hopeless by physicians, by direct miraculous intervention at the Church of Ste. Anne de Beaupré, there can be no charge of exaggeration made against the author at scenes, weaving themselves through *A Daughter of Patricians*, and happening at the foot of the miraculous statue of Bonne Ste. Anne. The tiers of crutches, purported to have been left by those whom miracles have cured (an actual photograph of which is shown at page 160), will give the reader a very fair idea of how exceedingly frequent miraculous manifestations in the church must be.

THE AUTHOR.

MONTREAL.

A DAUGHTER OF PATRICIANS

CHAPTER I

A FATEFUL NIGHT

"Anon through every pulse the music stole,
And held sublime communion with her soul."

THROUGH the snow-laden air the sonorous tones of Gros Bourdon, the largest bell in America, could be heard echoing and re-echoing miles away from the old Gothic towers of Notre Dame Church, in Place d'Armes Square, Montreal. As he thundered out his summons to the faithful to attend the grandest fête of the year, ten sister bells, almost as majestic as he, blended their brazen voices with his so vociferously as to thrill the whole massive edifice with sympathetic vibrations.

Although upon the hour of midnight, the snow-covered streets were dark with people hurrying to the great church, whose imposing nave and tiers of lofty galleries could accommodate eighteen thousand souls

It was Christmas Eve: to the devout French Canadian the night of nights; the anniversary of the birth of Him who, nineteen hundred years ago, came to preach goodwill to men. To-night, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and ninety-six,

was to be given a musical festival, so imposing in character as to attract the faithful and music-loving for many miles around. Artists, well known for their skill on stringed instruments, were to lead a monster orchestra and swell the imposing chorus of a thousand male voices.

For over an hour the yawning doors had been swallowing up the ever increasing multitude, when there drove up to the church a handsomely equipped sleigh, and there stepped from it an elderly gentleman, who with much solicitude assisted to the slippery sidewalk a young lady. Despite the furs which muffled her, it was easy to see that her figure was of more than ordinary grace.

Slipping her arm beneath that of the gentleman, she said, in a tone bordering on anxiety, "I hope, papa, we shall not be too late; if we are" (here her voice changed to one of bantering menace), "I shall surely lay hands on that musty collection of birds, mammals, and reptiles, and for ever destroy the fascination they have for you; their total annihilation, I am sure, is the only thing which will ever cure you of your shameful habit of always being late."

This dire threat had in no wise the effect it should have had upon its recipient: he gave a delighted little laugh, peered proudly through his spectacles at the attractive threatener, tucked her hand more snugly under his arm, and said in a tone of the most reprehensible levity, "What a ferocious, war-like little woman! And only six months out of the convent, too; I tremble with apprehension for the future." But his manner changing to one of tender earnestness, he went on: "I too hope, dearie, that we shall not be late; I have been thinking of this pleasure for you for weeks, and if I spoiled it I should feel like destroying the collection myself."

Cuddling his arm closer, she answered teasingly, "Who ever heard of such arrant nonsense! You know full well that you would not destroy one musty feather, or deprive a reptile of a dried varnished scale, for a dozen daughters."

They had been moving steadily along the wide approach to the church with the eager crowds, and were at last ascending the steps leading to the massive doors. How lightly their hearts beat, and how little each dreamed of the dire events the inexorable Fates would weave into their lives, should they cross the sacred threshold!

In her eagerness to ascend the steps the young girl stumbled. The misstep was noticed by a superstitious *habitant* close behind, who hastily made upon his breast the sign of the cross, and dropped farther behind.

At last the doors were passed, and she stood in the body of the gorgeous edifice. In the bewilderment at the scene which opened before her, she scarcely noticed that the scarlet-clad beadle, who stood near the door with monster crook and imposing mien, had bowed to her father and was leading them down the main aisle to two, fortunately, vacant seats in the nave of the church. Well might her sensitive heart be thrilled. Before her was a sea of upturned faces fixed on the great orchestra and choir high up in the organ-loft, where towered an organ of colossal dimensions. A thousand gleaming candles, mingled with a multitude of subdued electric lights, dazzled her eyes and brought out with startling vividness the brilliant colours on the artistically frescoed walls, on the solemn imposing pillars supporting tiers of vast galleries, on the beautiful resonant dome, on the numerous figured saints, on carven niche and tall pinnacle.

She seemed scarcely to breathe as she slowly took off her wraps, and then turned her beautiful clear-cut face to the marvellous altar, or apse, which rose straight to the very ceiling, scintillating with unnumbered lights and carrying masterpieces of sculpture.

In the centre of the apse, suspended on a great cross, was the life-sized, scarred image of the Saviour; while crouched at the base of the emblem of suffering were the three sorrowing Marys. Numerous statues of the apostles and martyrs of the Church, surrounded by groups of angels, completed a scene upon which the *habitant* gazed with affecting awe.

With a long-drawn inward breath, the girl finally turned her eyes to a small altar on her right, where sternly sat the Church's greatest saint—Saint Peter—in his hands the massive keys that were to for ever bind, or loosen. The extended foot exposed his carven great toe, well-nigh lost to all human semblance through the unnumbered kisses pressed upon it by the countless seekers after peace.

The subtle influences surrounding her caused a thrill of devotion, almost painful in its intensity, to possess her. But presently a burst of melody from the organ-loft, blending with the answering voices of the priests who were gathered about the altar, announced the commencement of the impressive ceremony, and attracted her attention. Never before had she witnessed such a scene of stately pomp and grandeur as now ensued—the pomp of princes could not have surpassed it. On the dais, fronting the gleaming apse, with his back turned to the multitude, was a prince of the Church, the Canadian cardinal, clad in vestments of the richest texture and most gorgeous hues; directly behind him came four boys, carrying the long princely train

which hung majestically from his shoulders; following them were numerous acolytes, bearing candles of unwonted size, swinging golden censers, and carrying, in upraised hands, the holy sacraments; while, finally, behind them again, came officiating dignitaries of the Church, also clad in garments of beauteous design and varying shades.

The multitude of faces peering at this scene from the densely packed galleries, the quaint clothing in which many of the *habitants* were clad, the chanting voices of the priests, mingled with the feeling of strangeness at witnessing such a scene in the early watches of the morning, transported the imagination back to mediæval times, when in the dark background of such impressive scenes often loomed the grim spectre of the Inquisition.

The impressionable nature of the fair girl was wrought up to a keen, nervous tension long before the occurrence of the events which were about to completely change the whole tenor of her life.

The chanting voices abruptly ceased, and the priests seated themselves around the altar. For a few moments a deep, expectant silence reigned. A slight rustling in the organ-loft caused the attention to be attracted to it: a young man of poetical, foreign cast of countenance had stepped to the front, where every eye could see him, and was slowly raising his violin to his shoulder. For the briefest space he seemed to hesitate as he glanced at the vast expectant audience—after long years of arduous study abroad he was to informally play to the great public which, in the future, was to do him such homage.

It was known the composition he was to play—his own—was the tragic story of the Christ: the story which has so wonderfully fired the genius of

the great masters in all the arts; the story which has been perpetuated in such multitudinous forms; whose interest but increases with the march of years, and which longing humanity never wearies of hearing. To the piece he had given the simple but pregnant title of *Nazareus*.

A look of sympathetic concern mantled the girl's expectant countenance as she noted the expression of hesitancy flit across the player's face; but it fled the moment he drew his bow softly across the strings, and there floated through the church a wave of harmony, sweet as the fabled music of the spheres.

Such was the marvellous simplicity and ingenuity with which he unfolded the simple, yet grand old theme, that a child could have followed it:—"For unto you is born this day." The joyous opening strains might have been sung out in seraph voice, instead of played, so perfect was the accord of the strings with the soul of the player. So grand and consummate was the opening portrayal of the ecstatic rejoicings of those who had watched so long for His coming, and of their adoration of the newborn King of kings, that the hearts of the vast audience awoke to a still keener conception of the sublime event they had met to commemorate.

But presently, through the triumphant opening strains, were heard creeping subtle, monotonous notes: the rejoicing grew less and less, until, finally, it ceased altogether—the story was changing; the quiet of His boyhood was being told. Soon the vast dome was whispering back a refrain so even, dreamy, and touching, that it melted the heart and brought tears to the eyes of the girl who sat so quietly drinking in the weird, tender melody.

The dark, impassioned face of the player drooped

abruptly over his instrument, a magnetic light stole into his eyes, and his sinewy fingers took a firmer hold of the bow. With the change in his manner had come a change in the music; aweing whisperings of the stupendous drama, which was so to affect the world, were being shadowed forth. The wistful face of the girl had also changed, and in her eyes was to be seen that peculiar expression one so often sees in the eyes of a child when it apprehensively awaits disturbing events to which its imaginings have given birth.

From the kingly instrument were now surging tones of passionate warning—urging the wicked to flee from the wrath to come—denunciations, loud and clarion-like, against the whited sepulchres, the Scribes and Pharisees—and anon harmonious breathings of forgiveness to the erring and penitent. Threading deeply through it all were moaning, dramatic notes, pregnant with impending disaster.

A growing unrest had spread itself over the vast body of listeners. And now, with masterly conception of his theme, the player with a change of key swept away the warning notes, and boldly took up the events they had so wondrously presaged—of which the Temptation in the Wilderness was the first. Shrieking from the strings came outburst after outburst of horrid demoniacal glee, vividly revealing the triumph of the sombre hierarchy of hell over the power given its chief, for forty days, to tempt Him to yield to the frailties of the race whose image He had so gladly assumed.

No tremor lest he might now fail dismayed the player. With closed eyes, he stood as utterly oblivious of the listening multitude as though it did not exist; his soul had swept through the gloom of the ages and was seeing the horrors of that dire

siege which, by the grandeur of his genius, he was interpreting to his spellbound hearers. And now gruesome sounds, stolen by the enchanted strings from the caverns of the Prince of Darkness, filled nook and cranny of the mighty edifice, and the tumult of hell, over the recurring defeats of its grim monarch by the lowly Nazarene, was heard and understood by all. On and on went the weird portrayal of the stupendous temptation, until the imaginations of the ever superstitious *habitants* were completely mastered, and hands in all parts of the church were seen making the sign of the cross.

The effect upon the girl was startling: her bosom heaved rapidly, while her eyes gleamed under the mastering excitement which held her captive.

The tension on the mind of the listeners was for a time again relieved; for weaving happily with the harmonious, yet hellish discord, were rhythmic chords of joy, leading anon to strains of triumph, portraying the gladness at His victory over the great Enemy of mankind. Following the joyous strains came an even bewitching refrain; yet it was but the tone picture of the Master's short-lived peace after the great temptation, and but preceded the mockery of the trial in the Judgment Hall.

Not one of the varying shades of emotion, as they flitted across the face of the player, had escaped the eyes of the highly strung girl, and it was with feelings of renewed apprehension that she saw the look of repose, which his face had taken on when he had drifted into the restful refrain, once more fading into shadows—shadows which her quick intuitions told her were sure heralds of another scene in the swiftly moving passion play that was being depicted in such wondrous tone pictures.

With the delicacy of an Æolian harp, the strings

again expressed the player's changing mood, and sinister notes, lifelike in their semblance to the awe-inspiring and frenzied tumult of a mob whose heart is charged with religious hatred, soon marred the brief peaceful modulations.

With an involuntary movement, the girl clasped her hands and bent forward.

The musical unfolding of the mock trial was masterly in the weird power of its imagery. Under the spell of his own genius the player seemed to have absorbed the language of every emotion. Leaping from the imprisoned strings, and echoing to the very summit of the apse, came shouts hoarse with hatred, groans of derision, bursts of ironical laughter, and discordant murmurings, all so marvelously vivid that the devout realised now, indeed, how fearful was this, the world's greatest judicial murder.

Under the influence of the entrancing strains there loomed before the mind's eye, out of the vista of years, the great hall of judgment, at one end the enthroned vacillating Pilate, and before him the Prince of the House of David, surveying with wistful mien the wrathful concourse so wildly clamorous for His death. Rapidly, and with exceeding skill, the musical fantasia portrayed the striking incidents of that brief legal mockery.

And now the final scenes are being reached, and from the violin come wild and piercing staccato notes and chords, and there is heard, as though it were spoken, that dreadful, never-to-be-forgotten cry, from the race chosen of God, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!—His blood be upon us and our children!"

"*Mon Dieu, c'est terrible!*"—the exclamation fell from the lips of an aged *habitant*, as he listened,

with blanched face, in a corner of one of the vast galleries.

"Mary, have mercy upon them for the murder of thy Son!" whispered the trembling lips of the agitated girl. Transported by the vivid music, she had forgotten that the tragedy portrayed was nineteen centuries old.

Before the narration of the journey to the cross, a short intense silence again ensued. When it was broken, the church once more rang with the uproar of the infuriated mob. But, rising above the lyric pandemonium, was distinctly heard a strange march, with distressing wistful breaks in it. The heart of the girl melted; fain would she have been with Him and have borne the cross, the piteous frequency of whose fall delayed and enraged the mob in its eager march to Calvary.

Raising her eyes to the player's face, she was again affected by the change passing over it: his eyes suddenly closed; his shoulders straightened with a quick, nervous movement; a lock of dark hair fell over his brow, and his sensitive lips parted with nervous eagerness. At last he had come to the final event in the world's woeful drama—the crucifixion. Imposing beyond words was the beauty of its musical unfolding. Under its hypnotic spell the veil was lifted, and the souls of the listeners soared through the centuries, and saw, as if in the flesh, the last scenes of the piteous drama.

The swiftly moving bow was now filling the incense-laden air of the church with all the tumult of that day, as the maddened soldiers delved, and reared the cross on which to crucify Him of whom the prophets had so long spoken.

A brief pause, and then through the great church resounded sickening, dogged, chromatic chords, heart-

rending in their truth of monotonous hammer-falls. Convulsively the girl clasped her hands ; she almost cried aloud for very pity. But the tension of her mind was not yet to be relieved ; for rushing immediately upon the harsh hammer-like thuds, came anew a pandemonium of shouts, cries, groans, and mocking revilings, and there rang in her ears the words, " And they wagged their heads at Him. . . . And they reviled Him, saying, ' If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. . . . Let God deliver Him now ! ' "

In vain she hid her face and tried to shut out the scene upon which hung a world's redemption. The musical phantasmagoria was not yet concluded, and as she sat and still listened, she felt that if the end were not soon, her overwrought nerves must surely break.

Without warning, the taunting outburst at the cross ceased to pulsate on the air : there was a silence, almost like that of the grave, and then the violin filled the church with an outburst of human fear, dreadful in its agony. Following quickly upon the lyric cries of terror, came crash after crash of bass chords. As they rumbled to a crescendo in the mighty dome, piercing wails, conjured up by the gifted player, were again heard ; only to be swallowed up, however in the crashes, which again succeeded each other in relentless succession. To the ears of the girl, and to those of the multitude of listeners, came the vivid words, " And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened ! "

The deep hazel eyes of the girl no longer see the pale face of the player, although they are fixed upon it ; her eyes are now on Calvary's height, watching the maddened flight of those who had crucified Him

as they strove to escape from the riven heavens, the yawning earth, and emptying tombs.

Unconscious of her action, the girl partially rose to her feet, her fascinated eyes still fixed upon the face of the player.

The last tremulous notes were just dying away, and the hand of the player, which had wielded the magic bow, was falling to his side. His eyes opened just as she reached her feet, and he saw below him a beautiful girlish face, its enraptured eyes fastened on his own.

She stood but for a moment. When the face vanished, he turned slowly and sat down, thinking, in a dazed way, that he had looked upon some beauteous vision which the divine strings had for a moment conjured up. So vivid was the impression the face made upon him, in his wrought mood, that he scarcely heard the loud murmurs of admiration rising from the vast concourse. He was conscious, though, of the proud words of praise spoken to him by the aged priest who had led the choir, and to whom he was indebted for kindnesses which but few men ever give.

In answer to the old man's words of commendation, the player earnestly whispered that he would rather have his admiration than the praises of the whole world; but startled the priest, immediately after, by abruptly asking, "Did you see her, *père*—she who stood up for an instant in the body of the church?"

The audience, however, had risen, and Father Lacoste had time only to cast a puzzled glance at the player, to whom he was so passionately attached, before giving the signal to the choir to begin the closing song of praise.

As the priest turned away, the musician stepped

impulsively to the railing which screened the choir, and, drawing aside the curtains, looked eagerly down at the crowds as they surged towards the exit; but it was in vain he sought for the vision again.

The chorus was almost through, and he was about to draw the curtain and turn sorrowfully away, when his gaze chanced to travel once more to the main aisle, and there, almost beneath the choir, was the face that was to be with him so long as life should last. Either the magnetism of his gaze or the wish of her own heart gave him his desire, for just as the galleries were about to hide her from him she suddenly looked up—their eyes for the briefest space met once more.

CHAPTER II

GIOVANNI CORREGGIO

"Exalted souls
Have passions in proportion violent ;
Impos'd by nature on pre-eminence."

WINTER had gone, and the glorious skies of Canadian summer were stretched far and wide over the land. It was an early morning in July, and the sunshine was creeping up the massive walls of the old presbytery nestling by the side of the church which, the Christmas previous, had resounded to the thrilling strains described in the last chapter.

Slowly the sunlight creeps higher and higher up the walls till at last it darts through an ancient latticed window, and throws a cheerful light into a room made picturesque with massive, old-fashioned furniture. The absence of all feminine adornment in the room is revealed at a glance, yet withal it has an air of much comfort and decided refinement. On the walls hang paintings of many fathers of the Church who, in bygone years, wrought mightily for its advancement. Interspersed here and there among the solemn faces are pictures, too, of famous masters in the world of music—nearly all of whose biographies were to be found among the many volumes on the long bookshelves a little to the right of the fireplace. In the middle of

the room stands a table littered with books of music, and a little distance from it a finely carved organ.

Standing near the fireplace, with his arm resting on the mantelpiece, and looking with contracted brow towards the window, is he who so weirdly fired the hearts and imaginations of the multitudes the past Christmas Eve. His tall figure, measuring but a shade less than six feet, is well proportioned, and reveals that grace of bearing so exceedingly attractive in those of highly wrought, artistic temperaments, when attuned to perfect physical organisms. His handsome dark eyes, warm brown skin, and entire cast of countenance, strongly bespeak a foreign origin.

More and more emboldened, the sunlight steals yet farther into the room; yet its cheeriness utterly fails to attract the attention of the thinker or interrupt his abstraction.

So deeply are his thoughts engrossed that he fails to hear the opening of the door behind him or see the imposing, noble-looking priest standing on the threshold. Quickly noting the dejection in the attitude of the young player, the priest hastily closed the door, and strode towards him, a troubled look coming into his face. Reaching the young man's side, and laying his hand on his shoulder, the priest said in a tone of keen regret, "Giovanni, *mon garçon*, still brooding? How is it to end? Would that you would fight more determinedly against yielding to this fancy!"

"Fight against it more determinedly, *père!*" exclaimed Giovanni, with a touch of vehemence, turning to the priest; "it would avail me nought. If you knew how, during the months that have gone

since that night, I have striven to banish the persistently haunting face, and how peculiarly un-availing every effort has been, you would no longer think I have made but feeble efforts to master these moods possessing me." He restlessly threw himself into a chair.

Standing beside him, and resting his wrinkled hand on the curly dark hair of the young man, Father Lacoste said, tenderly as a woman, "*Pauvre Giovanni!* Perhaps I am too impatient, and do not make allowance enough for the passionate Southern blood in your veins."

Giovanni was touched with the love and sympathy in the old priest's voice, and said, "Would, for your sake, *père*, that I had come from a less dreamy and ardent race! Such a fancy would then have died early, instead of growing with time."

"Nay, nay, Giovanni, give voice to no such wish; I would not have you different from what you are for all the world holds; it is from your impulsive race that you have inherited the divine fire in your soul."

Giovanni looked thoughtfully at the floor and said in a low voice, "Sometimes the idea comes to me, *père*, that if I could but see her once more, and know really who she is, curiosity would be satisfied, and power would come to banish her persistent image from my memory."

Father Lacoste had lived for three-score years and ten, and the wayward human heart was to him as an open book. Slowly shaking his head, he said patiently, "You but deceive yourself, Giovanni; the physician does not seek to cure a disease by accentuating its cause. It is useless, Giovanni, but I cannot believe, as I have said before, that the face

you think you saw was anything else than the creation of your vivid fancy; you know how great was the strain upon your imagination that night, and"—

Rising hastily and walking to and fro, Giovanni broke out: "No, *père*, no, I am harbouring no delusion; she was no creature of fancy. I saw her the first time as distinctly as I now see you. She was standing alone in the centre of the great church, her grand tragic eyes fixed on mine, an expression in them that I know will be with me for all time. I saw her, the second time, as clearly as before, though but for a moment, as she disappeared beneath the galleries, her wistful eyes meeting mine once more."

Seeing the pain at these words, which the priest strove in vain to hide, Giovanni stopped his restless walk at the priest's side, and said in changed, regretful tone, "When I recall, *père*, all the sorrow I have given you since that night, conscience is keen in its reproaches. Knowing how intensely anxious you were that I should return to Paris, immediately after the Christmas holidays, and finish my studies, it was but natural you should have been sorely hurt that weeks stole by before I went, and still more so upon my revealing, on the day of my departure, that my many mysterious absences from you had been spent in haunting churches and other places, in the hope of again seeing the face that was so affecting me.

"But, *père*, it is only just to myself to say that, when I returned to Paris, I really cherished the hope that devotion to my art might so occupy every thought that memory of her would cease—would, for your sake, *père*, my hopes had been realised! As I have told you, I advanced rapidly in my

studies, and in a few months more I should have completed them. Yet I am visiting you again—on my summer vacation, it is true; but it has expired. I should be in Paris now, and yet I linger and distress you with a search that you think little better than madness. Such conduct, I know, is ungrateful and but poor payment for a lifetime's love, for a refined education, and for a competence that will make my life comfortable even without art. There is nothing, indeed, which I do not owe you, *père*. To-day I should have been utterly unknown and"—

Further words were stopped by the priest interrupting: "You have never been ungrateful to me, Giovanni; and as for your remaining unknown, that could never have been; genius such as yours could no more have remained hidden than could that of Paganini." In the priest's voice there was infinite pride.

Giovanni made no reply, but his hand closed tightly over that of the priest, and the old man went on, half sadly, half apologetically: "My hope and pride in you have been so great, Giovanni, and I have looked forward with such confidence to the day when the world shall bow before the genius I know so well you possess, that I am jealous of anything which threatens to come between you and your art. Art is such a hard taskmaster, Giovanni, and demands all or nothing." He paused, and stood looking at the young man in silence with a peculiar expression in his face. When he spoke again, his manner was intensely eager and pleading. "Giovanni," he broke out, "I have been thinking for days past of speaking to you of something that has been dwelling upon my mind: it is of a way by which you may get back your peace of mind. If

you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, it will not fail."

He paused for the briefest space, but without waiting for a reply, went rapidly on: "You have known, since you were a boy, Giovanni, of the famous shrine at Ste. Anne de Beaupré and of the unnumbered miracles performed there at the statue of Bonne Ste. Anne—miracles that the press, the country over, have attested to. This summer Ste. Anne has been answering prayers, and restoring the afflicted in a degree never surpassed before, and thousands are daily crowding the church. To-night, Giovanni, a train-load of pilgrims leave for the shrine. If it is a truth, then, that Bonne Ste. Anne can restore consumptives to health, give eyesight to the blind, straighten limbs that have been distorted for years—in fact, heal every human malady—is it reasonable to suppose her power is not great enough to give ease to a distracted mind? Giovanni, for my sake, will you take the train with me for Ste. Anne de Beaupré to-night?" His voice shook with eagerness.

Looking straight into the kindly eyes, Giovanni said, with an effort, "I will go with you, *père*."

"And you will strive to have faith, Giovanni?"

"I will strive to have faith, *père*."

The priest slowly raised his hands. Giovanni bowed low his head for the blessing.

After invoking it, Father Lacoste turned from the room, his lips moving in thanksgiving.

Giovanni stood looking after the imposing priestly figure, a fine expression lighting up his face. "What a beautiful character," he said, speaking to himself, "and how firm his faith in the power of Ste. Anne

to heal! I know he will be disappointed when I return; but I could not refuse to accompany him. Pray to have faith!—yes, I have promised; but I know the memory of her will be with me even at the very foot of the statue, and turn with me from it."

CHAPTER III

FACE TO FACE

"Custom forms us all;
Our thoughts, our morals, our most fix'd belief
Are consequences of our place of birth."

THE shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré, which Father Lacoste was so eager Giovanni should visit, was but a night's journey from Montreal. When the pilgrim train which bore the priest and Giovanni drew into the little village below Quebec, at the foot of the vast Laurentian range of hills—which dictate the course of the stately St. Lawrence to the Atlantic—it was yet early morn, and the sun had not long risen.

Giovanni had not been in the section of the train where the hundreds of suffering pilgrims were, and as he stepped to the station platform with Father Lacoste, a scene such as he had never witnessed before met his eyes: hobbling along the platform, in the direction of the church near by, or being lifted from the long line of cars, were suffering beings who had been gathered from almost all parts of the continent; some from the teeming cities of the great American republic; some from the hot climes of far-away Mexico; and some from the lonely hamlets of the vast Canadian North-West—beings for whom the physician's art could hold out no hope, and who, in their extremity, had turned for succour to the famed Canadian shrine. The

hacking cough of the consumptives, the contortions of the palsied, the twisted limbs, the sightless eyes, the discoloured bandages—that all too plainly spoke of the gruesome covered sores—coupled with the half-suppressed cries of pain, caused Giovanni's heart to ache with pity.

The rush of the afflicted to the church must have been, in its pathos, like the rush of the afflicted to the pool of Bethesda, when its healing waters were about to be moved. In vain the priests and nuns in charge of the excursion proclaimed that Bonne Ste. Anne could heal the last as well as the first, urged patience, and approach to the church with decorum—the rush went on; for deep in the minds of each sufferer was the ineradicable fear that many miracles might not be performed, and so the great importance of being early in the church could not possibly be magnified.

Those who were unable to walk, seeing the rush, and dreading to be late, broke out into fretful cries, and urged the men who were approaching with the litters to make haste.

When the rush finally had gone by, Father Lacoste and Giovanni (they had stepped aside) also turned their steps towards the church, whose graceful Corinthian architecture the sun was just beginning to illumine and beautify.

Depressed by the scenes he had witnessed, Giovanni walked in silence by the priest's side.

In the hope of dispelling his gloom, and fitting his mind for entrance into the edifice, Father Lacoste began impressively to speak of the great antiquity of the church, and of its widespread fame for miraculous manifestations. Pointing at the church, he said, "How one is impressed with the thought, Giovanni, that for over two centuries Bonne

Ste. Anne, in this secluded French Canadian village, has been performing miracles! Little wonder the church should be known the continent over. Well, indeed, does it deserve its name, 'The Lourdes of America.' "

Thinking he perceived interest in Giovanni's face, he continued very earnestly: "There is the most absolute proof, Giovanni, that more than two hundred years ago, Bonne Ste. Anne began to show special favour to this edifice; for besides numerous other evidences of the fact, there is a letter, still extant, written in 1665 by Mary of the Incarnation, foundress of the Ursuline Convent of Quebec, in which she says, 'Our Lord vouchsafes to work great prodigies at the intercession of the Holy Mother of the Blessed Virgin at the church of Ste. Anne de Beaupré; for the paralytic are made to walk, the blind to see, and the sick, no matter what their malady, are given health.'

"More than this, Giovanni, the church was so famous in 1670 that Queen Anne of Austria sent a superb chasuble embroidered by her own hands, and still preserved. Finally, there is in the church to-day a finger bone of Ste. Anne herself, sent to the church in 1670 with a fragment of a rock extracted from her room in Jerusalem."

The priest ceased, and cast a sidelong glance at Giovanni, who answered, somewhat absently, "Yes, *père*, the church has indeed a wonderful history."

The lack of interest in the reply brought a shadow to Father Lacoste's face, and he looked at the ground in a troubled way. They walked on now in silence, Giovanni preoccupied as ever.

When they reached the steps of the church, Father Lacoste turned to Giovanni and said, with a look of confidence, "Although your faith, Giovanni,

has never been what I have longed so often for it to be, I know you will not forget the promise you have made me, that when you kneel at the foot of the statue you will earnestly try to believe."

"I shall not forget my promise," answered Giovanni earnestly.

Father Lacoste clasped his hand warmly, and then entered the church by a side door, leading to the organ, at which he had been asked to preside.

When the priest had gone, an irresistible feeling came over Giovanni that he must be alone for a few moments before entering; and as the service had not yet begun, he strode down a picturesque path by the side of the church. After walking a little distance, he stopped in an absent way, and looked back at the famed edifice.

Presently he said ruminatingly, "It was in a church I first beheld her, and I never see one now but it deepens my desire to look upon her face again. Of all the places in the universe a church is the last which should have been chosen to banish her memory."

He had long stood, lost in thought—thought that must have grown very pleasant, judging from the tender light which came into his face—when there reached him the muffled sound of chanting voices, blended with the rich leaven tones of organ music. Starting from his reverie, he looked intently at the church, and said softly, as he moved slowly towards it, "Every instinct of my being tells me that nought on earth can make me forget her. I know, too, that if I thought recollection of her would be banished by entering the church I could not cross its threshold."

In this unregenerate state of mind he reached the church, threw open the heavy doors, and entered the

place of miracles. Wondrous was the scene which greeted his eyes. Prostrate in front of him, from the doors to the very altar, he saw hundreds of men, women, and children, their eager eyes, full of suffering from bodily ailments, fixed on a great statue of Bonne Ste. Anne, which towered close to the main altar at the far end of the church. Prayers, almost delirious in their earnestness, rang from every part of the edifice. Fastened round the statue, and stacked at the different entrances to the church, were a strange collection of crutches, bandages, spectacles, surgical instruments, and countless other things, left by those who had been cured in the past, to attest to the healing power of Bonne Ste. Anne.

The scene was made more impressive to Giovanni by the exquisite decorations on the walls, on the azure ceiling, and the collection of large paintings, depicting some of the famous miracles performed in bygone years by the patron saint of the church.

One great picture, near where he stood, showed Bonne Ste. Anne descending from the realms of the blest, and saving a whole fleet from shipwreck during a dreadful storm; another depicted the saint miraculously saving a vessel that was about to be ground to matchwood by a field of ice; while yet another portrayed the Mother of the Virgin hiding, by a cloud, several vessels, whose destruction men-of-war were seeking.

Among the faithful, faith was greatly inspired by a host of pictures showing Ste. Anne restoring to bodily vigour many whose feet were on the edge of the grave.

But the cries of the afflicted, which jarred harshly with the music stealing from the organ—seated at which could be seen the bowed silvery head of

Father Lacoste—quickly drew Giovanni's attention from the paintings to the sufferers about him. As he listened to their cries, saw their pitiful outstretched hands and pain-lined faces, a feeling of sadness, almost of awe, crept over him.

Suddenly a scream of gladness, followed by a crash, rang through the church, and startled Giovanni. Looking quickly towards the altar, he saw an aged, withered woman standing, and perceived she had hurled down her crutch and was proclaiming aloud that, for the first time in many years, she could stand without it.

The organ burst into loud peals of triumph, while the ministering priests chanted thanksgivings.

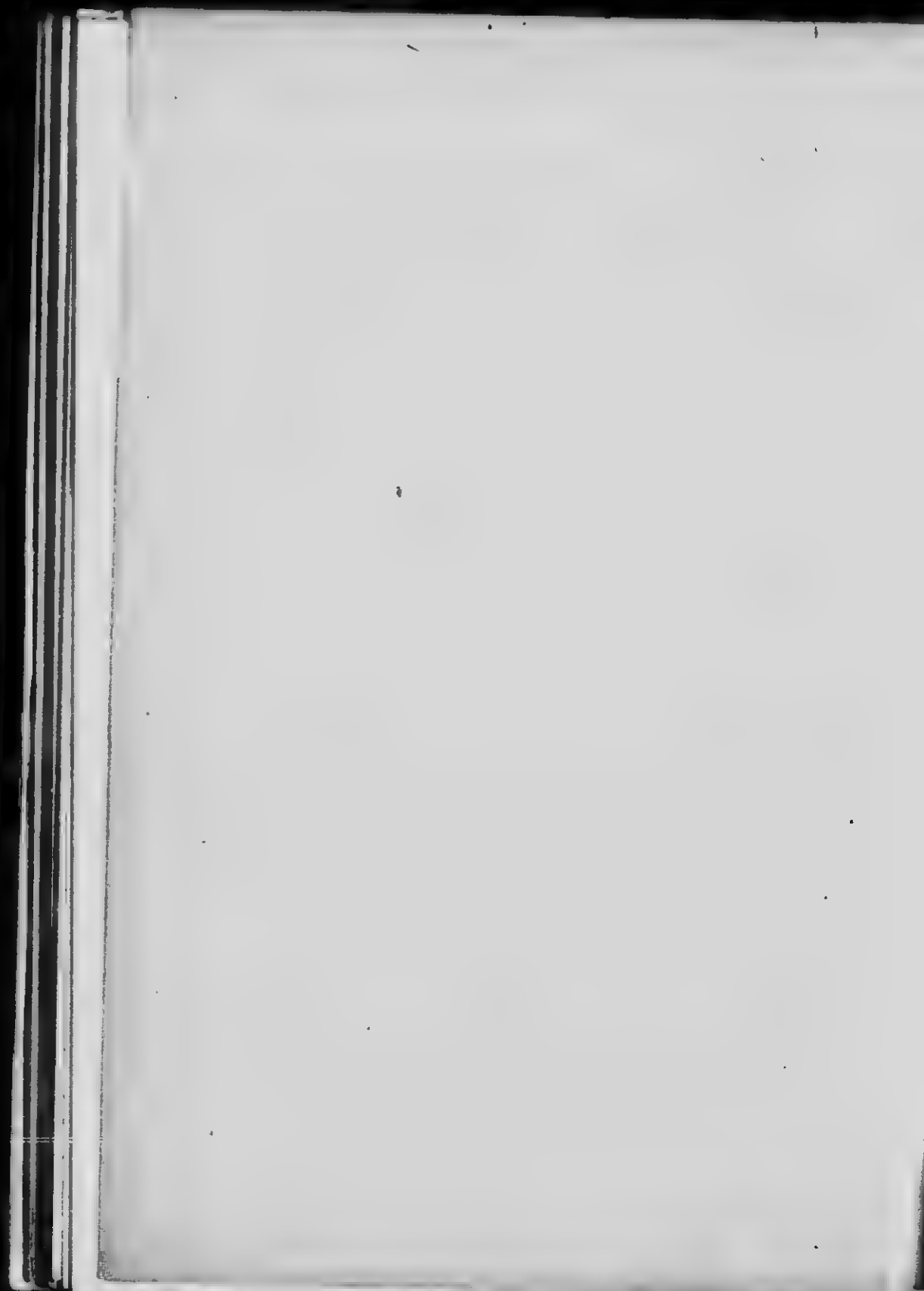
This new manifestation of miraculous power fanned the enthusiasm of the other sufferers to fever heat, and strange scenes ensued. Those who had the use of their limbs began to crowd from the pews towards the statue, while the helpless called frantically to be borne thither. Many in their frenzy threw their crutches away, declaring they had faith to be cured, and would walk alone; they made heart-rending efforts to demonstrate their faith, but their poor distorted limbs failed to glow with life and support their drooping bodies. Cries of the bitterest disappointment followed, only to be drowned by the ejaculations and prayers of those who hoped to be more favoured of Heaven.

"Poor, poor humanity!" involuntarily broke out Giovanni, as he looked upon these scenes; "may the Mother of the Virgin indeed hear them!" In his pitying mood remembrance of his promise to Father Lacoste, that he would pray at the foot of the statue came to him, and he began to walk down one of the aisles in its direction.

Before he had taken many steps his progress was



THE CHURCH OF MIRACLES: STE. ANNE DE BEAUPRÉ.



retarded by two females, also moving to the statue. One was a woman quite old, but the other could scarcely have been out of her teens. At every tottering step a dry, rasping cough shook the frame of the young girl, and caused the hectic flush on her cheeks to flame out still more vividly. At a glance it was apparent to Giovanni that the dread disease of consumption had all but devoured her lungs, and that the days of her earthly pilgrimage were numbered.

With glassy eyes fixed on the statue, the girl tottered on, her lips moving in prayer for the miracle which should slay the devouring element within her, and bestow again the inestimable blessing of health.

When a little more than half-way down the aisle, Giovanni saw her push the supporting arm of the elder woman away and attempt to walk alone; but she had sorely overrated her strength, and swayed so violently that Giovanni put out his hand to support her. Without turning, she pushed his hand away, saying, in weak, husky voice, "No, all shall see my faith, and then Ste. Anne will cure me."

She staggered on with still greater difficulty as she neared the statue. The elder woman followed close behind her, and besought Ste. Anne, in voice choked with tears, to behold the faith of her daughter, and heal.

Such was the ghastly look upon the girl's face that many of the afflicted ceased their prayers to gaze at her, and some in pity moved aside, that she might reach her coveted goal. At last the dreadful journey was completed: her nerveless, attenuated hands were seen to rise imploringly towards the statue, and her lips to part as though uttering a prayer for succour; but the words were choked by the crimson flood which gushed from her mouth and dyed her bodice.

Seeing her reel, Giovanni, who was close behind, started forward again to save her from falling ; but, ere he could reach her side, a figure which had been kneeling at the foot of the statue and urging the afflicted to faith and patience, started up and entwined her arms around the sinking girl.

Uttering a stifled cry, Giovanni dropped his hands. The expression of astonishment on his face could not have been greater had the statue stepped down from its lofty pedestal and succoured the sufferer ; for holding the dying girl in her arms was none other than she whose banishment from his memory he had promised to ask of Bonne Ste. Anne !

Her eyes had looked into his as she caught the girl ; but before he could perceive whether she recognised him or not she had knelt to minister to the sufferer.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUMMER HOUSE OF MONSIEUR D'EGMONT

"Nor sits expectation in the air."

THE *habitants* of Ste. Anne de Beaupré had many material blessings to be thankful for. For more than two centuries pilgrims had been visiting the place, and all had left more or less money behind them; for pilgrims had to have places to sleep, food to eat, and relics and mementoes to take home with them. Such were the thousands that now visited the famed place every year that most of the *habitants* of the village realised sufficient in the summer to keep them through the long months of winter—a piece of good fortune keenly envied by the residents of surrounding villages, who had to earn their livings by tilling the sullen rocky soil at the base of the Laurentian hills.

A recent occurrence in the village of Ste. Anne was leading the inhabitants also to look forward to the time when they would possibly add still more to their earnings by providing for permanent summer visitors. This hope was due to the construction near the village, the year previous to this story, of a handsome summer residence for Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont, a gentleman of much means and rumoured noble family. The title-loving villagers, in their eagerness to add worldly dignity to the place so favoured of Heaven, so improved upon the rumours as to the noble birth of the gentleman

that not unfrequently visitors were impressively told he was a direct descendant of the brilliant Louis xv.

It may be said that Monsieur d'Egmont could not have been more proud of the blood in his veins and of his patrician descent had the statement of the *habitants* been true, and he were, indeed, a descendant of the proud wearers of the fleur de lis.

Monsieur d'Egmont's house was situated about a quarter of a mile from the church, and could easily be seen from the village. The appearance of the house was most pleasing: its numerous bay windows spoke of commodious rooms, while its many turrets gave it a quaint, romantic look. The *habitants* always pointed out the structure with great pride, and it was no unfrequent thing for them to gravely inform pilgrims that Monsieur d'Egmont had built the house from a plan given his ancestors by the once owner of this great Canada—Louis xv.

The evening following the day Giovanni had entered the church and so strangely met her whom Father Lacoste so desired him to forget, Monsieur d'Egmont might have been observed in a room in his house which was so curiously furnished, that had the *habitants* but chanced to have seen it, they would quickly have ceased to idealise its owner, and would have classed him with dreaded persons of the Middle Ages who imperilled their souls with the dark art of witchcraft. The manner in which Monsieur is clad, and the implements he is holding, would have deepened such fearful suspicion. In his hands, which were arrayed in a pair of thick leather gloves, are two curiously shaped, bloodthirsty-looking instruments. Monsieur's body is enveloped with an apron which falls to his feet. In front of him is a bench, running the entire length of the room, littered with

bottles whose labels show they contain arsenic and other compounds of like dangerous nature.

Monsieur is holding firmly on the bench, with one of the instruments, a gruesome-looking reptile; while into its cavernous mouth he stuffs, with the other instrument, a stringy-looking substance heavily saturated with the poisonous ingredients of the bottles.

On the wall behind Monsieur hangs the skeleton of a man: the fleshless jaws are slightly parted, and appear in the subdued light to be leering at the owner of the room: in brief, it has been put together with reprehensible skill. In addition to this unlovely object, there are, in every corner, animals rarely seen outside of a museum. Some are standing, others crouching; but all are alike in one characteristic—an imposing air of menacing stillness, which would have been little conducive to an *habitant's* ease of mind. On perches around the walls, with wide-stretched wings, are three or four great birds, whose voracious-looking eyes are unblinkingly fastened on a number of small birds, also on perches, but safely ensconced in glass cases. Fishes, too, are to be seen reposing with unquivering fins and motionless mouths in water which never knows in its glass confines the unrest of storm and wave.

Assisting Monsieur d'Egmont, in his peculiar occupation, is a young man whose physical appearance is almost monstrous. His huge frame, over six feet two inches in height, is gnarled and out of all proportion: one of his shoulders is so very much higher than the other as to give him an appearance of deformity; his arms are so long that his sledge-like hands reach nearly to his knees—his whole appearance denotes immense strength. The face is ugly well-nigh beyond description: the mouth is so

large that it seems to stretch from ear to ear; its appearance, unhappily, being in keeping with the prodigious nose, massive protruding chin, and low retreating forehead; while his eyes are so very small as to look, under the meagre eyebrows and scant lashes, like mere black beads. His complexion could not be of a deeper and more unhealthy yellow were he a constant sufferer from jaundice. Every lineament of the face lacks intelligence. There is, however, about it something cunning and exceedingly dogged. He is dressed in the peculiar garb of a friar.

At short intervals Monsieur d'Egmont holds, at arm's length, the unattractive reptile, and views with evident pride, through his glasses, the result of his labours upon it. The absent-minded manner of his doing this has something very pleasing about it.

Monsieur's face is a distinguished one and strong in French characteristics. Few looking upon it and seeing its intelligence, refinement, and geniality would deem it possible that Monsieur could be capable of a narrowness which would not scruple to sacrifice everything which might antagonise him. The day was drawing nigh when this one failing of an otherwise exceptionally fine character was to work woeful results.

As Monsieur was about to lay the reptile on the bench again, the ring of a bell was faintly heard, and the friar partially turned towards the door. Monsieur d'Egmont paid no attention, however, either to the bell or to the friar, being too much engrossed with the stuffing of his new specimen. The truth is that Monsieur had for many years been a most zealous taxidermist, and the silent glaring animals around him, as well as the birds, reptiles, and fishes which

peeped from every nook and corner, were witnesses of his preserving skill.

Soon after the sound of the bell had died away a knock at the door was heard, and Monsieur said absently to the friar, "See who is there, Jean, please."

Jean Fontaine, ever pleased when he could be of the slightest service to Monsieur, strode quickly to the door and opened it, and there slowly entered the room Baptiste Monette, a servant of Monsieur's. When but a very little distance in the room he halted, and said nervously, as he cast a respectful glance at the leering skeleton, "A gentleman is in the reception-room and is waiting to see Monsieur. He has sent up this letter."

To have handed the letter to Monsieur would have necessitated the doughty Baptiste passing the object of his undying dread, the skeleton, and so, with a side glance at his *bête noir*, he thrust the letter into the hands of Friar Jean Fontaine.

While Monsieur slowly laid down his stuffing knives and put the reptile to one side, preparatory to reading the letter, Baptiste exhibited symptoms of the liveliest affection for the door.

Happily for Baptiste, the note was not a long one, and Monsieur quickly glanced through it. It read as follows :—

"MY DEAR MONSIEUR D'EGMONT,—I arrived in Ste. Anne yesterday morning with Monsieur Giovanni Correggio, the youth I told you I had adopted and sent to Paris, and of whose musical genius you had an opportunity of judging at the grand festival in the Notre Dame Church last Christmas Eve. For a reason which in the future I may reveal to you, I had a special motive in getting Giovanni to come to Ste. Anne. He was

in the church yesterday morning during very impressive scenes, and from his mannerism, after the service, I feel positive he received great good. He has signified a wish to remain over for a few days, and so I take the liberty of introducing him to you in this manner. Had I not been compelled to return unexpectedly to Montreal, I would personally have introduced Monsieur Correggio to you."

The letter bore the signature of Father Lacoste.

"Tell the gentleman I will be down in a minute," said Monsieur d'Egmont, turning to Baptiste, "and also tell Katie to ask Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont to meet me in the drawing-room."

Scarcely were the words out of Monsieur's mouth before Baptiste was out of the room, muttering under his breath maledictions against the bony object of his unconquerable dread.

As Giovanni waited in the reception-room, his eloquent face aglow with the keenest expectancy, he looked singularly prepossessing. The happiness of his expression deepened as he sat and waited, until, feeling that he could scarce contain all the joy in his heart, he rose and began to pace the room. But soon the eager expectancy and gladness left his face, and he stood suddenly still: the thought of how unsuspectingly Father Lacoste had given him the note to Monsieur d'Egmont had come to him again. Once more he remembered how, after the service in the church the day previous, Father Lacoste had met him at the church door, and seeing the new gladness in his face—and mistaking its cause—had turned aside to covertly mutter thanks to Bonne Ste. Anne.

As he had seen the old man's rejoicing he had felt he could not explain to him that the gladness

he had read in his face was not due to any miraculous causes, but to again seeing her for whom his being so craved. He had told himself that he would surely explain to the priest later on; but it had so happened that Father Lacoste had been called suddenly away. When parting with the priest he had endeavoured to reveal all to him, but his heart had rebelled so fiercely that conscience had been vanquished.

He remembered, too, how gladly the old man heard of his desire to remain over for a few days, and how gladly he had given him a letter to Monsieur d'Egmont (whose daughter he thought was still in a convent), that he might not find the time lonely. It was true he had not asked for the letter, so unexpectedly offered; yet his conscience smote him for taking it; for he had learned the name of her he had met in the church after the service.

While memory was recalling these things, he heard a footstep in the room, and, turning, saw advancing towards him with outstretched hand a somewhat delicate, but extremely patrician-looking gentleman. "I am deeply indebted to Père Lacoste for this honour," said the gentleman, with kindly courtesy. "I am Monsieur d'Egmont."

"The indebtedness is mine," answered Giovanni, the happiness coming back to his face as he clasped the outstretched hand.

Monsieur d'Egmont shook his head deprecatingly and said, as he seated himself and pointed to a chair at his side, "I had the pleasure of listening to your playing, Monsieur, on Christmas Eve, and can say in all sincerity that I never heard any violin music to surpass it in beauty of conception and realistic unfolding of theme. Monsieur has great gifts for one so young."

There was a touch of fatherly interest in Monsieur d'Egmont's voice. He had known for years that Giovanni was an orphan, and so youthful was his appearance that he seemed to him but scarcely on the verge of manhood. It was a grave mistake, and repented of afterwards; for despite his looks Giovanni had turned twenty-three, and, even now, was enthralled with life's mastering passion.

"My art is very dear to me," answered Giovanni simply; "but there are heights to which I have not yet reached, and never shall, I fear. Study, unremitting study, alone gives perfection."

He ceased somewhat abruptly, remembering Father Lacoste, and her whose bewitching face was responsible for his present idleness.

There was silence for a few moments, and then Monsieur answered, in slow, absent manner, "Yes, art such as Monsieur's must be very exacting." His words were scarcely audible, for despite himself his mind had wandered to the fascinating room he had left, and was dwelling upon the difficult problem of how to complete the stuffing, without breaking the skin, of the hideous object he was working upon. His hobby, an engrossing one, was constantly responsible for little breaks of etiquette—which to one of his natural courtliness was the source of sincere, but unavailing repentance. Remembering his seeming discourtesy, he looked up quickly at Giovanni and said, with a little laugh, "I am a taxidermist, and my hobby is always lying wait to surreptitiously whisk away my good manners."

As the speaker smilingly arose, Giovanni, to his surprise and amusement, saw in his host's hand a crooked, dangerous-looking weapon, which he was evidently utterly unconscious of holding.

Seeing the amused look on his visitor's face, and

following the direction of his glance, Monsieur saw the instrument. Holding it up, he shook his head in amused hopeless manner, and burst into a peal of hearty laughter, in which Giovanni could not help joining. "What a bloodthirsty host I must have looked with this in my hand!" he said at length, "but in truth it is only a stuffing iron. I thought I had left it behind me in the room, but I evidently put it in my pocket instead. I was completely unconscious of having unearthed it. My daughter truly says, Monsieur Correggio, that I am hopelessly incorrigible."

The pleasing little incident strongly impressed Giovanni. He felt sure that his host's character was simplicity itself—had he, however, but devoted as much time to the study of human nature as to the violin, he would have been far more wary in thus quickly deciding.

Turning to the door, Monsieur d'Egmont continued, "But if Monsieur will kindly follow me to the drawing-room, I will introduce him to my daughter and sister, whose memories are far better adapted for social purposes than mine."

As Giovanni bowed, in consent, a rush of colour deepened the brown of his cheeks—he dared not trust his voice to answer. As he followed his host out of the room and up the stairway his passionate heart beat with intense joy and expectancy.

(And at this very moment Father Lacoste, away in his quiet room under the shadow of old Notre Dame Church, was seated at his organ chanting a song of thanksgiving to Good Ste. Anne for her mercy to one who was more to him than a son. No doubt troubled him that aught now stood between Giovanni and his glorious mistress—Art.)

Crossing a broad corridor, Monsieur d'Egmont

drew apart two heavy curtains and inclined his head to Giovanni. Entering the drawing-room, Giovanni found himself in the presence of two ladies—one elderly and the other quite young. As the ladies courteously arose, Monsieur d'Egmont first introduced the elder lady, his sister, Josephine d'Egmont; and then turning to the younger lady, he said to her, "This gentleman, Severine, is Monsieur Correggio, whose playing so deeply impressed us last Christmas Eve—Monsieur Correggio" (turning to Giovanni), "my daughter, Severine d'Egmont."

With graceful ease the young lady stepped forward and with outstretched hand welcomed the musician.

CHAPTER V

THE MEETING

"Maiden, when such soul as thine is born,
The morning stars their ancient music make."

BEFORE Giovanni stood a girl just entering upon womanhood: that mystical time in girl-life when, creeping in upon placid, unthinking content, dawn moods of strange unrest; when the pleasures of girlhood have not yet palled, yet in some perplexing way seem to be losing their zest; when tears start to the eyes even while fervid songs of gladness are on the lips—the magical borderland of life, when the awakening soul begins to try its pinions, longing to wing its flight to the realm of the inscrutable, and there question the silent deities as to the secrets stored up in the womb of unborn days.

From the open brow of Severine d'Egmont was brushed back, and kept by imprisoning pins from falling far below her waist in rippling folds of beauty, a wealth of brown hair of the most delicate texture. Her hazel eyes, clear and bright with perfect health, showed a ready intelligence in their changeful light. The clear skin, the girlish, rounded cheek, the perfectly modelled throat, and the lace gently heaving and falling over the soft lines of the bosom, made a picture that appealed strongly to the love of the beautiful in Giovanni. Enhancing every charm, too, was breathed that subtle femininity which bows

men before it, and wins a devotion mere physical beauty can never command.

There was a peculiarity about the fair face which Giovanni, however, did not notice this night—a singular droop at the corners of the mouth which frequently gave the features when in repose an expression of wistfulness. Despite the youthfulness of the countenance there was that about it which an artist would instantly have chosen as a study for great dramatic possibilities.

Giovanni, with perfect outward composure, but rapidly beating heart, clasped the welcoming hand, and seated himself on a chair by her side. Her words of greeting had been cordial, but there was not the slightest intimation in them that the events of the past Christmas Eve, or the previous day, had been given more than passing attention.

As was natural, the theme of conversation first taken up was music.

"I have always regretted," said Josephine d'Egmont, turning to Giovanni (he was struck with her likeness to her brother), and giving the conversation a personal turn, "that I could not go to Montreal last Christmas Eve and hear you play; I am exceedingly fond of violin music." Looking at Severine, she went on: "Fortunately, my niece has been taught to play the violin, so, although I am considered an invalid, I am not altogether deprived of listening to it. Mademoiselle d'Egmont plays with much skill, Monsieur. She too is very fond of the instrument, and gave much time to its study in the convent."

"I was inexperienced enough, Monsieur," said Severine gravely, "to think I could play with some skill before I had the privilege of listening to you and learning what it is possible for genius to do. I have had clever masters, but they could only teach

what they knew—genius is not to be learned by rule.”

“No,” said Monsieur d’Egmont, continuing the theme of discussion, “creative faculties, and temperaments which ever understand the varying moods of the human heart, are gifts from God; gifts for which one cannot be too grateful—they are so rare.”

“But get your violin, dear,” he continued, speaking to his daughter, “and play me Stevenier’s ‘Les Regrets.’ It is a favourite of mine, Monsieur Correggio; so much feeling can be put into it.”

Of too sincere and true a disposition to demur because of the presence of Giovanni, Severine arose, took up the violin near the piano, and as she raised it to her shoulder, said simply, as she looked at Giovanni, “Monsieur will remember that I am but a novice.” Very beautiful she looked, as she stood there, with raised arms, the soft light falling on her hair, partially shading her exquisite face, and revealing, more clearly from her position, the perfect outlines of her girlish figure.

She had just begun to play when the huge, ungainly figure of Friar Fontaine entered the room. It seemed strange to Giovanni that no attention was paid by his hosts to the new-comer, who seated himself in a dark corner, and cast furtive glances, now at the beautiful player, and anon at Giovanni. Had the spot where he sat been less gloomy, an unusual glitter might have been seen in his eyes.

There was decided cleverness and ability in the manner in which Severine played the beautiful composition, so expressive of varying shades of feeling and lending itself to such beauty of interpretation.

From the changing expressions on the girl's face Giovanni could see she was striving with all the power of her susceptible nature to catch the divine fire and make the strings speak with new life. When she ceased there was a shade of disappointment on her face. Without speaking, she walked to Giovanni's side, and holding out the violin said, with a touch of regret which she could not hide, "The soul would not come, strive as I might; but Monsieur has the gift, and I should like to hear him play it."

"Mademoiselle thinks too lightly of her playing," said Giovanni quietly, taking the violin from the outstretched hand.

Without further comment he rose to his feet. His manner pleased her; had he extolled her playing, her sensitive disposition would have been jarred; intuitively she recognised his utter lack of affectation.

Soon the little party was sitting in silent, rapt attention, yet the theme was the same—and still how utterly different was the effect! Not one of them, when the beautiful melody ceased, could have defined just where the enchanting difference lay; yet to their souls it was as tangible as was to their eyes the instrument they had so often seen Severine play upon, and by which this master-hand had wrought such glorious transformation.

Under Giovanni's genius every subtle shade of feeling in the fine composition had glowed with a life so fervid and striking as to incite feelings of wonder.

The witchery of the plaintive music had come to Severine with a force which would have been incomprehensible to one less imaginative. There were tears in her eyes when Giovanni ceased, and

it was hours before the influence of the music left her. Science has demonstrated that there are natures which music has the power to rouse to the keenest delight, or sink to dangerous depths of despair—such a finely wrought temperament had Severine.

With his intuitive insight into the effects of music, Giovanni had seen the power just exercised over the fair girl, and he rejoiced at the thought of the happiness his art might give her—could he but have known what dread effect his art was destined to have in her life his lips would have paled with fear.

While playing, Giovanni had not thought to look in the sombre corner where the friar sat; had he done so he would have been startled with the contending expressions of wrath and fear which suffused the giant's frowning face.

When the music had ceased, and while Severine was in the act of turning to Giovanni, Friar Fontaine stole softly and swiftly from the room, his exit causing no more attention than his entrance. Marred in body and intellect, a dependent upon the bounty of Monsieur d'Egmont, and a being to be pitied, the idea of him harbouring thoughts that were nought less than monstrous, and which might lead to acts of madness, never even remotely crossed the minds of those who had so long befriended him.

Giovanni never thrilled under praise, yet it gave him pleasure to hear the sincere homage rendered by Severine to his art.

After the playing, and before the conversation had become general, Monsieur d'Egmont rose (the memory of the specimen he had been preserving was strong upon him) and rang for a servant, saying to Giovanni, as he looked mischievously at his

daughter, "I must show Monsieur my taxidermist-shop—a room which Mademoiselle d'Egmont has placed under the ban because of the unpardonable way it has of taking up my time."

With an arch elevation of her brows, Severine turned to Giovanni and said warningly, "Do not be deceived, Monsieur, with my father's apparent anxiety to show his musty treasures, which so shamefully fascinate him. I know, from the most unmistakable symptoms, that his unhappy yearning to get back to the room and preserve some ghastly treasure is simply overpowering him."

While Monsieur d'Egmont was protesting and laughing, Baptiste Monette (the servant who bore such ill-will to the room in question) entered, and was instructed to go to the workshop and turn on the lights. This duty was usually performed by Friar Fontaine, but unthinkingly Monsieur had rung for Baptiste—a mistake the poor superstitious fellow would have given a month's salary to have prevented. The mistake was, incidentally, to lead to the prediction of impending calamities by an old servant of Monsieur d'Egmont's—predictions which, strange to say, were to be fulfilled.

With a slight inclination, and a sudden catch of the breath, Baptiste turned from the room to obey his instructions. As he slowly strode down the passage leading to the hated workshop, he cast longing glances at a corridor branching from the one he was traversing—and which, by an abrupt turn, would have landed him in an exactly opposite direction.

Baptiste was a good-looking fellow, about twenty-five, with the French Canadian *habitant's* typical dark skin, dark hair and eyes, sinewy frame, and wholesome dislike of anything that in the least savoured of the uncanny.

As he drew near the abhorred room, base imagination conjured up with cruel distinctness the gruesome skeleton—which he must pass close by in the darkness in order to reach the lamps. As he thought of the ordeal before him, he could scarcely repress a groan.

For a few moments he stood, marshalling his sinking courage by recalling divers doughty deeds which certain of his ancestors were accredited with having performed in the stormy days of the early settlers, when the taking of white men's scalps by Indians was of such frequent occurrence as to be a matter of but passing comment—to the victors.

Baptiste had just begun to take comfort from his cogitations, when it suddenly occurred to him that none of the heroic deeds of his ancestors had been performed in rooms where the devil, and witchcraft, might treacherously have been hiding with intent of casting fearsome spells over them. The advent of this recollection restored Baptiste's superstitions to more active life than before, and under his breath he uttered lusty maledictions at his folly in ever having come to a house where the bones of the dead were dug up and with awful skill strung together.

For the benefit of the reader, it may be said that Baptiste long ago would have left the place had it not been for the presence in the house of a certain Katie Kimball, a pert, vivacious, domineering bit of humanity, whom he thought a monument of learning, and followed in the most slavish manner.

As he finally reached the door and softly and slowly opened it, a low, ominous growl struck Baptiste's ears from the dark interior, and he shut the door with an alacrity that would have been a revelation

to Monsieur d'Egmont. But scarcely had he done so when he recollected, and muttered angrily, in broken English, "Dat's only de *sacre* dog of Friar Fontaine, and it's crazy like its master." Somewhat relieved, he opened the door again and spoke to the beast, which he knew was crouching under the long table. It ceased its growling. Gingerly entering the room, he began to feel his way in the direction where he thought the lamp bracket was. With laudable forethought, he tried to still his growing apprehension by thoughts of Bonne Ste. Anne—a saint for whom he had great respect, but whom he was in the habit of sorely neglecting when his environments were more to his liking. His one terror was of coming into contact with the skeleton, which he knew was on the side of the wall where hung the bracket. For a dozen cautious steps or so all went well, and the explorer had made up his mind it would be a wise precaution to give thanks to the saints—who had evidently been sent by Good Ste. Anne to guide and guard him—when his outstretched hand suddenly encountered something sharp and bony, and he started back with an exclamation of terror. His very hair seemed to rise on end. He turned to make a grand stampede to the door, when it occurred to him that it was utterly impossible for the skeleton to be in that part of the room, and that the bony substance must be a part of the anatomy of one of Monsieur's stuffed animals. With extreme caution he put out his hand to verify this hoped-for conjecture: his conclusions had been correct; his hand encountered a furry substance, and presently slipped into a bony, gaping mouth.

The relief on the mind of the adventurer was so great that he almost felt a glow of affection for the beast; certain it is that a hazy determination

crossed his mind to be generally less prejudiced against Monsieur's stuffed specimens in the future.

Once more, with outstretched hands and bated breath, he took up his hated explorations. He steered, for quite a little distance, straight as a die for the bracket, and would doubtless have reached it, had not some elfish sprite perfidiously instilled into his mind the thought that by taking a sudden turn to the right he would find the object of his search.

What happened Baptiste remembered to the day of his death: scarcely had he turned, and advanced half-a-dozen steps, when his exploring hand became entangled in the small ribs of the skeleton—the horrible thing rattled gruesomely against the wall. As he tried to withdraw his hand, a button on his sleeve was caught in one of the many joints of the bony fingers, so that the skeleton hand actually seemed to be clutching his sleeve. This appalling evidence of animation on the part of the grisly object, coupled with its evident intention to strike up an acquaintance with the marauder who was fumbling in such a disrespectful manner among its ribs, filled poor Baptiste's cup of horror to the brim. With a frantic wrench, he released the fleshless fingers, and then (completely forgetful of the oft-boasted courage of his ancestors) turned about and bore towards the door with incredible speed. The ominous sound made by the bony hand as it swung back against the wall, coupled with a growl from the forgotten dog, were no mean factors for the extraordinary sprinting achieved by Baptiste on this momentous occasion.

As he dashed open the partly closed door, and charged into the dimly lit corridor, sounds of voices fell upon his ears. Before, however, he could arrest

his momentum, he was sailing past Monsieur d'Egmont, the two ladies, and Giovanni. The fear-stricken visage of the doughty pacer, coupled with his unwonted speed, caused the ladies to draw aside with exclamations of alarm. Monsieur d'Egmont looked at the apparition through his glasses with an expression of concern which, under other circumstances, would have caused much mirth.

When, finally, Baptiste brought his meteor-like progress to an end, and turned with trepidation to Monsieur d'Egmont, he blurted out in fearfully mutilated English, as he pointed in the direction of the dreaded room, "Don't go now, Monsieur, into dat room, wit' de two lady, before firs' get de pries' to bring holy water, and drive de debble out of dat man dare who is hang up on de wall and who has notting on his body but bone." The recollection of the horror he had gone through made the speaker pause and shiver.

Something of a smile broke over the faces of Monsieur d'Egmont and the two ladies; but the shade of perplexity on Giovanni's still remained.

"The skeleton somehow must have startled you, I suppose," said Monsieur d'Egmont soothingly, taking advantage of the pause in Baptiste's oratory.

"Startle me?—Oh, *oui, oui*, Monsieur, he startle me so much dat I near die," went on Baptiste, with bulging eyes, "for jus' when I put out de han' for fine de lamp, he—dat skeleton man—take hold of me on de ris' and want for make me stay in de room." Again Baptiste paused, his teeth chattering.

"You did not stay then to light the lamp?" asked Monsieur, stroking his moustache.

"No, no, Monsieur, I not light it; I too 'fraid wit' some debble ting like dat in de room."

Monsieur partly turned his face and said, "Well,

I shall have to get the evil exorcised out of this skeleton, Baptiste. But you may go, and I will attend to the light."

Hoping that the word "exorcise" meant that it was Monsieur's intention to scatter the bones of the skeleton to the four winds of heaven, Baptiste hurried away without further bidding.

When the little party laughingly reached the room—Giovanni having been enlightened as to Baptiste's fear and detestation of the skeleton—they were surprised to find the lamp lit and Friar Fontaine quietly standing in a corner near the long table, pulling to pieces a bundle of tow. He had entered the room immediately after Baptiste had left it, and knowing the party was coming, had lit the lamp.

The only notice taken of him was a request from Monsieur d'Egmont to be handed the reptile lying on the table—the one he had been operating upon when Giovanni was announced.

As the friar obeyed the command his restless eyes flashed covertly down into Giovanni's handsome face, and from thence to the clearly cut, delicate features of Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont.

As Giovanni looked up at the colossal, strange-looking being, the dog, which was still crouching under the table, began to growl loweringly.

Pointing out the dog, Severine said to Giovanni, "That is Pataud, Friar Fontaine's dog, Monsieur Correggio." Then smiling pleasantly at Friar Fontaine, who quickly averted his face, she went on, in the light pacifying tone which one uses to a child or one mentally afflicted, "Where you are, Jean, we are always sure to find Pataud."

With an abrupt twist of his ungainly shoulders, Friar Fontaine turned towards the dog, a great evil-looking mastiff, and stilled its vicious growlings by

saying, in slow, clerical voice, "Peace, peace, Pataud, peace." So quickly had he turned that no one had noticed the hot flush which rose to his sallow face when Severine had spoken to him. But had it been observed, it is not likely it would have attracted even passing attention, as he was weak of intellect, and had been treated for years as a child by Monsieur d'Egmont and his family.

As Monsieur d'Egmont had taken the ugly reptile from Friar Fontaine the usual kindly look on his face had turned into one of positive benevolence. Beaming at it through his spectacles in silence for a few moments, and then turning abruptly to Giovanni, he said with proud satisfaction, as he held the unlovely object up for admiration, "A splendid specimen, Monsieur, is it not?" Without waiting for a reply, he continued, with increasing gusto, "It only reached me this morning, after a journey of many hundred miles. I shall set great store by it. I was preserving it when you did me the honour to call—but possibly Monsieur does not know what a very rare family it belongs to?"

Giovanni had to admit ignorance even of its name.

Nothing could have delighted Monsieur d'Egmont better; the opportunity to expatiate upon the fad so dear to him was never allowed to be lost. "It is, Monsieur," he replied promptly to Giovanni, "a fine specimen of the spotted iguana. The skin is in capital condition, not a scratch upon it; an excellent subject for the taxidermist's art. But I must give you its lengthy pedigree. The first record we have of this family of reptiles dates back to"—

"Oh, papa, papa," broke in Mademoiselle Severine, coming to rescue Giovanni from what she knew was in store for him, "you have compassion on no one.

Monsieur Correggio will never get round the room, if aunty or I do not take pity on him and rescue him from your clutches."

With a look of discomfiture, mingled with merriment, Monsieur d'Egmont ruefully shook his head, and tenderly laying the reptile down, said to Giovanni, "Monsieur is very fortunate in having the ladies with him; strangers go through fearful torments if they happen to fall alone into my hands."

Shaking her head hopelessly at her brother, Mademoiselle Josephine d'Egmont said, "Gustave, the fact cannot be hidden that this hapless fad is engrossing you more and more every year." Her smiling face, however, showed much content at the hobby she jestingly belittled. In the look she gave her brother there was a pride very pleasant to see.

Laughing and chatting, they began to move about the room and inspect its numerous objects of interest. Stored in it were found birds, animals, and reptiles from almost every clime, preserved by the taxidermist's subtle art. It was a room in which one could have spent many hours and not have wearied. Hovering by the side of his guest, Monsieur d'Egmont, in his pleasing, courtly way, gave ready and valuable information about his collection. A dozen times he had betrayed alarming symptoms of supplementing a few brief remarks, however, about some specimen, with details long enough to detain the little party till daybreak, but divers admonitory tugs on his coat-tail, from his ever watchful daughter, diverted the imminent danger of thus spending the night. Thanks to his daughter, too, Monsieur d'Egmont was prevented, on several occasions, from entombing in his pocket many

small specimens, instead of putting them back in their lawful places.

Giovanni, as he noted Monsieur d'Egmont's unaffected delight in the strange heterogeneous family he had collected and preserved, was keenly impressed with the openness of his character. Coupled, too, with Monsieur d'Egmont's unaffected mannerism, was a courtesy so unvarying and natural that it could not but deepen the impression as to the simplicity of his character. Giovanni thought he read with ease the apparently uncomplex nature before him: "Such a nature," he thought, "would be completely incapable of prejudice or unconquerable dislike." But before Giovanni left the room an event occurred which caused him to doubt the accuracy of his impressions.

They had been almost around the room, and were about to take their leave, when Monsieur d'Egmont's eyes lighted upon a bird of gorgeous plumage, near where Friar Fontaine, with clouded face, was standing, and he asked Giovanni and the ladies to return for a moment. Upon seeing the party approaching, Friar Fontaine noiselessly moved to an opposite corner of the room, where his face was shaded, but where he could very plainly see Giovanni. As Monsieur d'Egmont took down the bird, which was singularly perfect in outline and graceful in bearing, he said to Giovanni, "I value this specimen, Monsieur, very highly. As Monsieur sees, it belongs to the *Paradisea apoda* family. It is one of the Great Emeralds—a variety almost extinct." He was pointing out the brilliant plumage of the bird, and dwelling upon its proud bearing, when he abruptly said, in a tone entirely different in its strong intonation of pride from that which had hitherto characterised his speech, "How very

marked, Monsieur Correggio, even in the lower order of things, is the distinction of kind; while in the human race birth makes a distinction infinitely more striking. Does not Monsieur also think so?" As he uttered these words there stole into his patrician face a look of unutterable pride and haughtiness.

With a sinking at the heart for which he could not account, Giovanni swept a glance at the two ladies, and perceived something of the same haughty expression in the face of Josephine d'Egmont. On the features of Mademoiselle Severine it was also slightly reflected.

With an effort, Giovanni politely agreed as to the chasm which the accident of birth is ever supposed to make in the human race, and then, to his relief, the conversation drifted to another subject. As it did so, Monsieur d'Egmont's manner changed once more to its old simplicity. The incident, however, had strangely depressed Giovanni, and some moments passed before he could shake off the feeling—which, somehow, he felt he would not like his hosts to notice. When they left the room, a few minutes later, Giovanni's old brightness had returned, and he felt sure his sudden depression had not been seen.

But scarcely had the door closed behind him than Friar Fontaine turned swiftly round, and dashing the towel he had been tearing to the floor, shook his great fist after Giovanni. Every muscle of the giant body worked with rage, while in his eyes was the baleful light of insanity.

When Giovanni left Monsieur d'Egmont's house later in the evening, he had accepted an invitation to return the next day and be a guest of Monsieur's during the remainder of his stay.

As he walked along the winding country road towards his lodgings in the village, his mood was one of restful content and happiness. The scene which spread out before him could not but deepen content. Away in the distance, the tin-clad tower of the famous church glittered under the lavish brightness of the moon like burnished silver; the quaint, whitewashed French Canadian cottages, nestling together, had hidden, under the charitable light, the many stains that relentless time had made, and appeared actually beautiful in their reflecting whiteness; while, finally, patches of the serpentine dusty road looked, against the horizon, like clear pools of placid water—pools in which Giovanni almost imagined he could see the reflection of the vain queen of the night.

But had the night been tempestuous, happiness would have reigned in Giovanni's heart—at last he had seen and conversed with her who had so influenced him. In the days of the past he had sometimes been troubled with the thought that possibly she might be lacking in depth of character, and that, if he ever met her, he would find he had set up an impossible ideal in his heart; but such fear was now dispelled.

He recalled again and again, as he walked along, the many events of the day, and how her every act and expression had shown the sincere, intellectual nature—characteristics which naturally intensified her great physical beauty. As he recalled also how passionately her nature was swayed by music, he rejoiced in the common bond between them; yet, with the rejoicing, there was a vague feeling of unrest, and he could easily have wished that in some way her nature was not quite so highly strung. Visions of what he might accomplish in his art with

such a woman ever at his side now fired imagination, and, bowing his head, he strode along in the silver halo, almost unconscious of where he was, till he happened to plunge into the deep shadow of the church of Ste. Anne.

Instantaneously, with the blotting out of the moonlight, came a different train of thought, and he recalled in the gloom the intense pride with which Monsieur d'Egmont had spoken of the distinction, and chasm, which birth created, and recalled, too, the reflection of Monsieur's pride, if in less marked degree, on the countenances of the two ladies. Suddenly, and unaccountably, she who was already so dear to him seemed as though she were lost to him for ever. With something like a shudder, he hurried into the moonlight again, horing in the magic of the silvery light that he would be able to throw off the inexplicable chill the shadow of the church had cast over him; but strive and chide himself as he might, he failed to banish it even for an instant

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST LESSON

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

SOME of the depression of the previous night remained with Giovanni even in the sunlight of the following day, and was only escaped when, in the afternoon, he was again in the presence of the girl who was so occupying his thoughts. His reception by Monsieur d'Egmont was so warm and cordial as to make certain impressions he had had the previous night in regard to him seem hard and unjust.

But conscience had something to do with Giovanni's unrest. When he awoke, thoughts of Father Lacoste had assailed him. He had recalled once more all he owed the loving old man whom he knew he was not dealing frankly with. His duty, he knew, was to write that it was not for the sake of spiritual things he was remaining, but for the sake of her he had been so earnestly told was but a creation of his fancy.

Giovanni was naturally frank, but while he earnestly regretted that he had let the old priest go away without acquainting him with the truth, the difficulty of informing him by letter, and bitterly wounding him, as he knew he would, was more potent than all regrets; so comforting himself with

the argument that in a few days more he would be able, by word of mouth, to fully explain everything, he had simply penned a few brief words to Father Lacoste, saying his stay at Ste. Anne would last for a week. When writing the lines, he knew he was making niggard return for a lifetime's kindness and confidence, and was equally aware that it was the witchery of a woman's influence which was causing him to act as he had never thought he could.

The afternoon of the day Giovanni became Monsieur d'Egmont's guest was spent in seeing some of the quaint sights in the neighbourhood of the church. Monsieur had excused himself from accompanying Giovanni and the two ladies on the plea that if he did not complete, without further delay, the specimen he was working upon, it would surely be ruined.

The afternoon was beautifully bright and clear. Walking by Severine's side, with the faint perfume from her soft white garments now and again reaching him, the music of her voice ringing in his ears, and the hope of some day winning the peerless girl possessing him, Giovanni felt the sweetness and desirability of living with a power never before experienced. It was during this walk that he became acquainted with a striking trait in Severine's character.

The first place of interest shown to Giovanni was a famous well of miraculous water close to the church. Gathered around it were scores of afflicted, some of them bathing eyes that had never seen the light of day, and which nothing but a miracle could make see; others were openly applying the water to sores, and praying aloud while they did so that they might be cured. Those who could not remain

over longer filled bottles of every description with the believed-in fluid, in the hope that in their far-away homes it would bring down the miracle they had vainly sought for here.

While Giovanni was standing watching these scenes, Severine suddenly stepped from his side to the well and partially immersed her handkerchief in the water. As she did so their eyes chanced to meet, and he saw hers were burning with a religious zeal that caused him strange concern.

Turning from the well, Giovanni was shown the "Scala Santa" or "Holy Stairs," where fresh scenes of human suffering met his eyes. Painfully ascending a long flight of stairs, at the summit of which stood statues of Bonne Ste. Anne, the Virgin, the Saviour, and the apostles, were climbing all conditions of men, suffering from every conceivable malady. By this penance they hoped to move the saints to pity, and win their intercession with Bonne Ste. Anne for their cure. So great was the suffering of some of the sick that they rested their heads on the stairs and wept; but they would far rather have suffered death in their self-imposed penance than have returned without reaching the summit. While here, Giovanni saw Severine's lips constantly moving in prayer.

Other places, almost as replete with human self-denial, were visited. Stationed near one and all of them were seen villagers calling upon the sick to purchase from them pieces of the "true" cross of Christ, or to buy charms they were exposing for sale, all of which were declared efficacious in curing diseases, or in protecting from evil influences, no matter how malign.

From these scenes they turned their steps to the renowned church, where Giovanni saw more of

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SCALA SANTO, OR "HOLY STAIRS."

Severine's religious ardour, which still more accentuated the inexplicable feeling of apprehension on his mind about her. The church was again filled with pilgrims, and their agonised prayers, mingled with groans of suffering, so affected the sensitive girl as to cause her to show symptoms of actual physical pain. Sinking on her knees in the church, and heedless of all around her, she prayed with an agony of entreaty to the great statue to have pity on those who were suffering so keenly, and for the Blessed Christ's sake to heal them. So intense and broken finally became her petitions, that Giovanni in his love and sympathy felt that he must surely gather her in his arms and carry her from the church. The anxiety which her religious zeal caused him was increased by perceiving her aunt looking nervously at her niece, and finally anxiously whispering to her that it was time to leave. With evident reluctance, Severine rose, her face white and strained. When they were descending the steps of the church, she turned to Giovanni, and looking seriously and wistfully up into his face, said in voice broken with pity, "The mystery of human suffering, how great it is, Monsieur! It always wrings my heart."

Before Giovanni could reply, her aunt hastily interposed, the shade of anxiety still on her face: "Yes, it is a mystery, dear, we shall never be able to solve; and hence, knowing this, our grief should be tempered with reason. It is impossible that Bonne Ste. Anne should heal all who call upon her, and so, Severine, you should not give way to grief which may be dangerous to your own health."

Turning to Giovanni, she continued, but with a side glance at the girl, "I suppose, Monsieur, that old persons like myself grow unduly solicitous, but

there are times when I cannot but feel anxious at the intensity of my niece's religious fervour."

Giovanni was not then aware that years of Severine's life had passed in a convent where religious fervour had been instilled into her mind with as much zeal as had the accomplishments of learning, until worship with her had become a strong second nature. Coupled with this religious training, her residence during part of the summer near the great Canadian shrine, and the weird scenes of religious fervour daily enacted in the church, had so increased the influence of the religious over her, that frequently it had seemed to her that the sacrifice of a nun's life must be the crowning glory of a woman's existence. Playing such a part as religion thus did in her life, she could not understand her aunt's admonitions for moderation, and with the inexperience of youth was quite ready to ascribe the good lady's fears for her health to the undue solicitude of years.

With a smile that drove away the wistful sadness and made the beautiful face look wondrously sweet, Severine looked up at Giovanni and said, this time in a tone of light banter, "I sincerely trust that before Monsieur leaves I shall be able to convince my aunt of the danger she runs, from the Church, by so constantly preaching against the doctrine of zeal."

The ingenuous, bewitching face, with its parted lips disclosing the small white even teeth, won Giovanni over to her side despite his own misgivings, and he traitorously replied that he too hoped her efforts to convince her aunt of the needlessness of such solicitude in regard to herself would be successful. His jesting and making light of her aunt's concern was recalled with bitterness afterwards.

The short walk home was pleasant and uneventful; but, just as they were entering the house, Giovanni chanced to glance up at one of the windows in the upper part of the dwelling, and saw Friar Fontaine standing at it and gazing down upon him, his weak, almost repulsive face wearing an expression of distress and anger which Giovanni could not understand. Seeing he had been observed, the watcher turned swiftly away.

It was Giovanni's good fortune that evening after dinner to have the pleasure of Severine's company alone in the drawing-room for a time. Monsieur d'Egmont had hied straight from the dining-room to his workshop again, while Mademoiselle Josephine, who was somewhat of an invalid, had to take rest before she could join the young people.

The conversation between Giovanni and Severine, which was first upon the events of the day, drifted to art and artists, and Giovanni was struck with her wide knowledge of these subjects—that her education had been thorough was at once apparent. There were times, however, during their conversation when she was not quite at home in regard to certain technical knowledge of some subject, and then her quiet hazel eyes would look openly into Giovanni's, as she unaffectedly confessed her ignorance and asked for information. The quickness with which she understood demonstrated to Giovanni an unusual perceptive mind and bright intelligence. From painting, sculpture, and other arts, they presently turned to the theme of music. Speaking of its influence upon herself, Severine grew very animated, and her eyes brightened. "Music and religion, Monsieur," she said passionately, "are two controlling factors in my nature; they sway me with a power I cannot comprehend—and—and"

(she hesitated and became perplexed)—“and which I seem sometimes almost to dread.

“And your matchless playing, Monsieur,” she smiled, but the shadow did not quite leave her face, “affects me as never music did before; it can raise me to almost delirious heights of happiness, or sink me into depths of fear and anguish.”

This high tribute to his art brought to Giovanni a feeling of sincere pleasure, and also a peculiar sense of power, that hitherto he had but vaguely experienced.

“Mademoiselle,” he answered, speaking very earnestly, “has the imaginative, divining temperament of a true artist herself, and so music will appeal to her with a force understood by few others. The same characteristics, however, are also capable of going to extremes in a cause that perhaps” (he hesitated, thinking of her zeal in the church) “might have unlooked-for consequences.”

She did not reply at once. His meaning she understood, but she had a feeling that she would rather not discuss this subject again. Finally, a bright, playful light came into her face, and she replied, as she rose and seated herself at the piano, “I am afraid Monsieur is about to turn traitor and ally himself with my aunt in her fight against my devotion for the Church.”

Lying open before her on the piano was a song she loved for its pathos. Being anxious to change the conversation, she ran her fingers lightly over the keys, and began to sing—

“And see the rivers, how they run
Through the woods and meadows, in shade and sun,
Sometimes swift, sometimes slow,
Wave succeeding wave, they go
A various journey to the deep,
Like human life, to endless sleep!”

Her violin was lying on the piano in its accustomed place, and when she ceased singing she took it up, and asked Giovanni if he would play for her. As he acquiesced, and as she handed him the instrument, she said, "Monsieur must not think me selfish in so frequently taxing his kindness, but I could listen for ever to playing so glorious."

He did not reply till he had tightened one of the strings, and then he said slowly, "And Mademoiselle will pardon me if I say I could play for ever to such a listener."

There was no intonation in his voice, but there was something in its quality that for the first time strangely stirred her heart.

An overwhelming desire to touch her heart with something of the passion which dominated his own seized him. Possessing him, too, was the fascinating desire to ascertain if her nature would respond as promptly to the pleadings of a passionate love serenade as it did to the influences of sacred music. His eyes lit up with a new hope.

Like an inspiration came to him, "*Le Réveil de l'Amour*," a tender, glorious serenade he had studied in Paris, and, aglow with the desire in his heart, he began to play it.

The sentiment of the composition, breathing of undying love and devotion, was in perfect accord with his own longings, and soon the thralldom of his art so possessed him that there were intervals when he was scarcely conscious of the presence of his listener.

And so true and responsive was the girl's temperament to the attack upon it that, before he had been playing many moments, the impassioned story of Tennyson's "*Maud*" flashed to memory, and

there rang in her mind the words of the impassioned lover—

“Oh let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet!”

He was giving living tongues to the strings—
tongues that pleaded for love so eloquently as to
quicken her breathing and strangely move her.
There was that now about the passionate yearning
in the verse which affected her as it had never done
before. She sat perfectly still, her eyes riveted on
the floor, and the feeling strong upon her that she
must not raise her face to that of the player.

He was looking down at her now, as he was
playing, inexpressibly glad and hopeful. As he
continued to look at her, hope was strengthened, and
the strings sang out yet still more subtly the story
they had to tell.

With the skill of the magician, he won her from
her mood of restraint, and ere he ceased she was
sitting with her head resting against the back of
the chair, listening with a look of compassion which
did more honour to his art than could any words of
commendation. He saw her lips slightly move, and
knew she must be repeating some lines. Had the
strings been silent, he might have heard her murmur
the triumphant words of the lover as he waited for
Maud—

“There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, ‘She is near, she is near’
And the white rose weeps, ‘She is late’;
The larkspur listens, ‘I hear, I hear’;
And the lily whispers, ‘I wait.’”

When he laid down the violin, he had conjured into her face a pensive, sympathetic light that urged him to dare and hope almost all things.

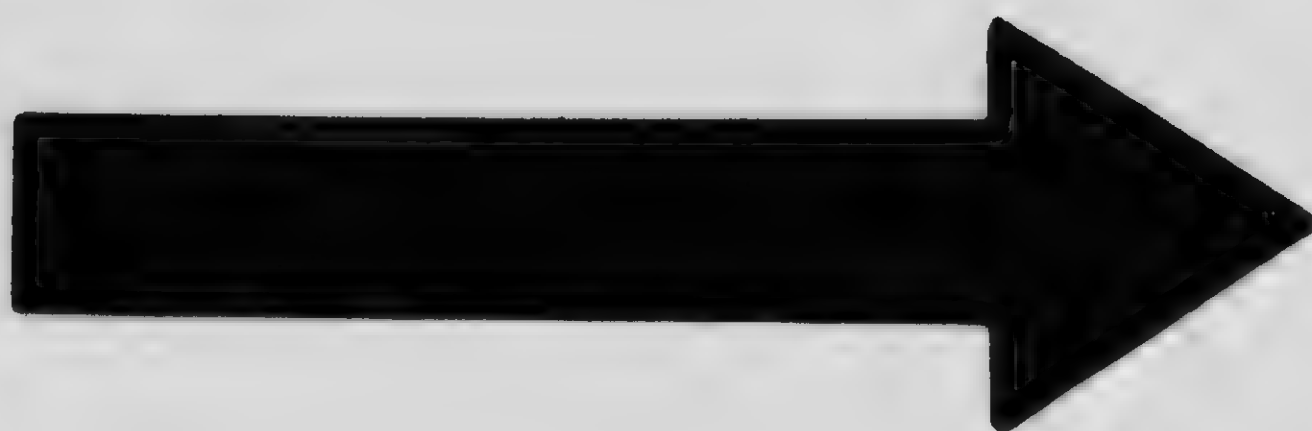
"I think it a very beautiful and impressive serenade; does not Mademoiselle?" He was standing very near to her chair, his face partially turned, lest it might betray the secret which he knew he must hide.

The sound of his voice slightly startled her, and she answered pensively, "It was a serenade, Monsieur?" Continuing after a pause, she went on slowly, "Yes, it is a very, very beautiful serenade, and wondrously expressive; but it was Monsieur's genius that gave it its expressiveness." She rose almost hurriedly, and continued in eager longing, "Ah, I would give the world to be able to interpret a composition in like manner."

Acting upon a sudden impulse, Giovanni turned quickly to her and answered, "It is often said, Mademoiselle, that what is called genius is but accumulated knowledge. Mademoiselle is young and does not know what persistent practice can do. If—if I might but have the honour of teaching Mademoiselle during my short stay, I"—

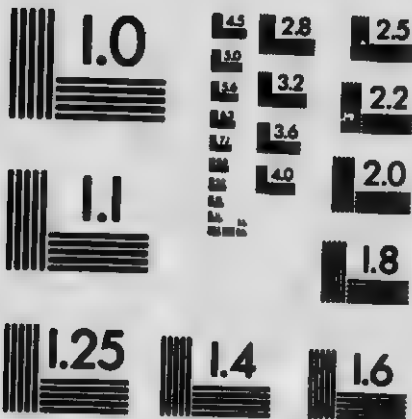
He ceased suddenly. But she understood, and answered with a smile, and a sad little shake of her head, "Practice, I fear, Monsieur, never creates the true artist. But Monsieur is exceedingly kind, and I can only trust I may learn quick enough to be worthy of being taught." She looked up, and their eyes met. In his face there was that which in some wizard way once more conjured up Tennyson's "Maud," and again the words of the lover rang in her ears—

"Oh let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet."



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As her eyes fell, Giovanni turned to the music-folio and selected a piece from it. It was Stevenier's "Les Regrets," the first piece he had heard her play, and which she loved so much.

His manner was composed when he turned to her again and asked her to take her first lesson, were she not too fatigued.

She gladly acquiesced, and took up the violin.

As he bent over the music-stand, near where she stood, to lay the piece he had chosen upon it, he heard the sound of soft, swift footfalls, and, looking up, saw Friar Jean Fontaine, his huge hands clenched behind him, his chin almost resting on his chest, and his restless eyes fixed on the carpet.

Severine also noticed his entrance, and said kindly, "So you too are attracted by Monsieur Correggio's playing, Jean?"

"Yes, yes, Mademoiselle, yes," he answered heavily, without turning, as he strode over to the bay window, and presently drew the curtains together.

Severine seemed to think nothing of his peculiar mannerism, but upon Giovanni it had a disquieting effect.

Presently the silent listener was forgotten, and was not remembered again till the lesson was nearly over, when, finding it very difficult to give a passage the proper delicate shading and expression, Severine looked up into Giovanni's face and said she feared she should never be able to master it.

While she was speaking and looking into the face of her teacher, the curtains were parted, and, as abruptly as he had entered, Friar Fontaine stole from the room.

There was something so restless in his manner that Severine said thoughtfully, as she looked after

him, "Poor Jean, this is one of his restless days, but it seems to me he is worse than usual."

Giovanni would have liked to ask her who he was, but she had spoken in that contemplative way, as though the subject were a matter in which a stranger could not possibly have any interest, and so Giovanni made no comment.

The lesson was just about over when Monsieur d'Egmont and his sister entered. Both expressed pleasure at Giovanni's kindness in offering to teach Severine something of his art while he was with them.

When the hour came for retiring, Giovanni's hope was still more buoyant: the first lesson had been to him one of unadulterated happiness, while the bond between them—music—had been still more strengthened. He longed for the hour of the next lesson.

As for Severine, her emotions were conflicting; there were times when the day seemed to her to have been the gladdest she had known, and yet, again, at times she felt strangely depressed.

CHAPTER VII

A BOOK OF ILL OMEN

"What avails it that indulgent Heaven
From mortal eyes has wrapt the woes to come,
If we, ingenious to torment ourselves,
Grow pale at hideous fictions of our own?"

MADAME PICARD, housekeeper for Monsieur d'Egmont, and her husband, Delphis, Monsieur's gardener, were, as French *habitants* ever are, obedient children of the Church, and most faithful believers in its power to work miracles. Such being their faith, it was with feelings of the most profound consternation they heard one night unfolded to them by Baptiste—of whose affection for skeletons the reader has cognisance—a series of stupendous miracles that had been performed outside of the Church—performed, too, by fearsome celestial beings, whose names had never been recorded in their voluminous Prayer-Books. Before narrating the disturbing event it will be well to say a few words concerning these two old servants of Monsieur d'Egmont's.

Madame Picard was now fifty years of age, and of goodly and comfortable proportions. Like nearly all French Canadian women of her age and station, she had discarded, for comfort's sake, annoying stays, and had girded her imposing waist with a broad ribbon, very festive in colour. Her dress also was very bright in hue.

A peculiar penchant of the good lady was a love of slippers so roomy that, in order to keep them in their lawful places, she had been compelled to adopt the habit of scarcely lifting her feet; the result being a gliding motion, very original, if not very picturesque.

Both her beaming, self-satisfied countenance and gaudy dress were in striking contrast to the physiognomy and habiliments of her good-man, Delphis, who was exceedingly lean of countenance, and who, the year round, was clad in nondescript, indestructible Canadian homespun.

On the evening Giovanni had been teaching Mademoiselle Severine, the devout couple had been sitting in the kitchen after the labours of the day, marvelling over new miracles reported to have occurred that day in the church of Ste. Anne, when their placid content was disturbed by the entrance of Baptiste, who had under his arm a portly worn book. From the expression on his face it was quite evident that he was wrestling with unwonted excitement.

Striding to the table where the old couple were sitting, he laid the book upon it, and, with bulging eyes, said, "*Mon Dieu*, Madame Picard, Monsieur d'Egmont has brought into the house a wonderful book. I heard him say he got it in an old book-store."

Drawing up a chair to the table, and craning his neck towards his listeners, he said in awed, impressive voice, as he pointed at the book, "It is the strangest book I ever read; it tells about religions we have never heard of, and of miracles performed a hundred times greater than those Good Ste. Anne performs, and of dozens of real gods, and of"—

But Madame Picard was too horrified by these

fearful assertions to hold her peace any longer, and, making the sign of the cross, she interrupted, "You are mad, Baptiste, to say such things. What if Good Ste. Anne or the priests should hear you!" She raised both her hands aghast.

Old Delphis, her husband, knitted his brows in alarm, and looked apprehensively at the volume; while Baptiste, somewhat disquieted by the words of Madame, also crossed himself, vehemently asserting, as he did so, that he had meant no disrespect to Good Ste. Anne, or to any of the priests of their Church.

The keen sense of the marvellous, however, had been so, thoroughly aroused in Baptiste that he could not abandon his theme, and so, after a slight pause, he went on, in a tone meant to revive the curiosity of Madame Picard: "It was, as I have said, Monsieur d'Egmont who brought the book into the house, and he is a good Catholic. If all the wonderful miracles the book tells about were lies, he would surely not have bought it. How do we know but that Monsieur may be thinking of having another church built in order to have worked in it miracles like those the book speaks of? The sick, you know, Madame Picard, would not care who cured them." As he ceased, he deftly opened the book, craftily exposing the picture of a man the lower part of whose body was like that of an animal.

Madame Picard caught sight of the picture at once, and said falteringly, "How did you come to get the book, Baptiste?"

Her wavering was not lost upon Baptiste, and he answered airily, "Oh, I got it on Monsieur d'Egmont's table in the library; he told me once I might take any book I would like to read. I went to get it—er—er—late last night; I was not" (he

cleared his throat) "sleeping well." He was very careful not to explain that his sleeplessness had been caused by the haunting recollection of his encounter with the skeleton; for in the quiet of his room, and in the absence of valour-giving daylight, he had actually begun to fear that the thing might stalk into his room and entwine its bony fingers once more around his wrist. It was in the hope of distracting his thoughts that he had gone to the library to get something to read, and had found the volume.

Madame Picard knew that Monsieur d'Egmont was a good Catholic, and hence Baptiste's arguments in favour of the propriety of reading the book had much weight with her. Still, she scarcely knew what course to pursue, and so, turning to her husband, Delphis, who was very chary of speech, she asked him if he thought any harm could come of looking through it.

Delphis, who was far more superstitious even than his wife, briefly answered in mistrustful, dogged way, that no good could come of the evil thing.

Paying no heed to the old man, Baptiste boldly took the risk of expounding the volume.

Madame Picard edged her chair nearer to him, her eyes very wide open. Delphis did not move, but his brows contracted heavily.

Now it had come to pass that Baptiste had acquired much honour among his acquaintances for the fluency with which he was supposed to read; but the reputation was poorly deserved, the truth being that he was a very sorry reader indeed. Thanks, though, to a very active imagination, he was never known to be brought to bay by any epistle, no matter how illegible or abstruse it might be. If words and sentences chanced not to read as he

deemed it was their duty to do, he simply concocted new ones. Owing to a very ingenious method of half reading, half explaining, this novel manner of ignoring whatever puzzled him became possible.

On the present occasion he contented himself not with reading, but with explaining what he said the book contained.

"The book says," he began, as he pointed at a full-page picture of a creature with horns and legs of a goat, and arms and feet of a man, "that this is a god. His name is Pan."

Noting the look of concern on Madame's face at this surprising information, he added soothingly that the god did not preside over the destinies of people like French Canadians, but of people called 'Gyptians. These 'Gyptians, too, and their many gods, were in countries an immense distance off, and so could not possibly have anything to do with the blessed Church to which they belonged.

The latter part of this information brought more comfort to Madame than anything else, and feeling more at ease, she bent over and looked more closely at the picture. For quite a while she was silent, and then, commiseratingly shaking her head, she asked how it was that the unfortunate deity was so deformed, and if the people he reigned over had bodily ailments similar to his own. She concluded with devoutly wishing that the poor creatures had known Bonne Ste. Anne, who would quickly have cured them of their afflictions.

The learned Baptiste, without a moment's hesitation, explained that the 'Gyptian gods were a little peculiar in the forms they assumed. As for the 'Gyptians as a people, they were all deformed like the god Pan. He was just about agreeing with Madame that it was a pity that both gods and

people had not known Ste. Anne, when he suddenly remembered the prodigious miracles accredited to such gods, and being very desirous of not antagonising any of them, he hastily and inventively added that the 'Gyptian people at one time had been formed like other people, but that the god, in order to show his power on one occasion, had in a single moment changed the entire physical condition of the nation.

Little wonder that good Madame Picard raised both hands and uttered a pious ejaculation at such an unheard-of miracle—the authenticity of which seemed to be borne out by Baptiste's citation of other acts out of the book well-nigh as marvellous.

Briskly turning over the leaves of the volume, and pointing at pictures here and there, the great expounder began to tell his dumfounded listeners, of three girls, called the Fates, who lived for ever, and who had the power of dictating even to gods what they should or should not do; of three sisters, called Furies, whose heads were clothed with living snakes, instead of hair, and who turned people mad; of female gods, who loved to reside in the sea, who had faces and breasts of women, but whose extremities dwindled down into serpents' tails, and who turned anyone unfortunate enough to see them into stone; of a monstrous god also, who had fifty heads, and whose cruel delight it was to prevent lost souls he was in charge of escaping from hell.

To the relief of Madame, the narrator presently arrived at a part which told of daughters of gods called Nymphs, who lived in forests, lakes, and mountains, and who brought much comfort to human beings. The feelings of the good body were greatly excited, though, when she heard of a man named

Prometheus, who had something of a god about him, and who had the honour of forming out of clay the first man; for doing which he incurred the hatred of a very powerful god called Jupiter. In order that Prometheus might be destroyed, Jupiter got another great god to make a woman out of clay. When he had done so, she was handed over to two female gods, one of whom made her very beautiful, and the other very deceitful. Finally, the woman was sent to Prometheus by the god who hated him, with a box in which were appalling disasters, and she was to try to induce him to open it. But Prometheus was not overcome by the woman's beauty and treachery, and sent her back again; this so angered Jupiter that he fastened Prometheus to a rock and sent a vulture to feast on his liver, which grew in proportion as it was devoured.

The bare thought of such suffering was more than kindly-hearted Madame Picard could bear in silence, and, wringing her hands, she burst out pityingly, "*Oh, le pauvre homme ! le pauvre, pauvre homme !*"

Her distress, fortunately, was much lessened by Baptiste's informing her that the victim was finally rescued.

While the dear credulous soul heaved a sigh of relief, Baptiste tacked on a piece of information (of his own manufacture) to the effect that, on account of the peculiar formation of Prometheus's liver, it was not subject to the pains of ordinary livers, and so was completely indifferent to vultures' bills.

Delphis, who had been listening with darkening face, tugged nervously at his shaggy beard as Baptiste paused. The old man's distrust of the book was rapidly deepening.

But the credulity of the listeners was to be

taxed still more heavily. With increased solemnity Baptiste began to tell of the existence of gods whose slightest nod shook heaven and earth; of gods who drove chariots through the air; of gods whose duty it was to lead the dead to the land of shadows; of gods and goddesses who presided over the realm of the damned—as well as numerous other gods of whom the two faithful old souls had never before heard a whisper. The enumeration of a few of the miracles performed by these deities brought forth frequent ejaculations from Madame Picard, and caused the wrinkled face of Delphis to pale.

The mention of a god called Talos, who destroyed strangers by making himself red-hot and embracing them, as well as others who turned people into animals, made Madame Picard mutter aloud a prayer of thanksgiving that she did not live in countries under the power of such dreadful beings.

When at last Baptiste got through his pleasing task and closed the book, a sudden silence fell upon them. Madame's interest having been satisfied, her inborn superstition returned with tenfold force. An uneasy feeling stole over Baptiste also, and he began to wish he had never seen the book—which the trying silence made him begin to think was nothing less than sacrilegious.

Delphis sat staring at the volume as though he momentarily expected all the marvels he had heard from its pages would leap forth and annihilate them.

Madame Picard was the first to break the silence. Turning to her husband, she said tremblingly, as she pointed to the book, "It says awful things, Delphis. Ah, if the priest were only here, or if we had some

of the miraculous water from the well to sprinkle the book with!"

Baptiste listened to these awe-inspiring words with pale countenance, and showed symptoms of edging away from the table.

Rising suddenly with a spasmodic movement, his withered face glowing as though with inspiration, Delphis stretched out both hands toward the book and said, with an impressiveness that would have unnerved stronger characters than the two who listened to him, "Evil has come to this house; it is a book of ill omen. Woe is about to fall upon Monsieur d'Egmont and his family, woe that will leave the house only when the evil book is taken from it. It is a book of the devil. Even now the curse is about to fall." His voice as he ceased had sunk to a hoarse whisper.

His weird words and wild figure impressed and terrified his hearers.

Madame Picard broke into lamentation, calling upon Baptiste to take the book at once to the priest and have him exorcise the evil out of it.

With Delphis's words ringing in his ears, Baptiste felt about as anxious to oblige Madame Picard, and take the book to the priest, as he would have been at a request to have gone to the realms of Pluto and bring the monstrous Cerberus to the light of day.

His only answer to Madame Picard was to rise empty-handed, as though his visit was at an end.

What new development this action of Baptiste's might have led to is unknown; for the door opened, as he rose to go, and there entered the room a prepossessing young woman, of *petite* figure, the pert serenity of whose countenance spoke of anything but superstitious characteristics.

As her eyes fell upon Delphis, who still stood pale and erect, and then wandered from him to the disturbed faces of Madame Picard and Baptiste, she stopped abruptly, and exclaimed, "Gracious me, what in the world's the matter?" The words were spoken in English, and though they were abrupt they had no tone of any peculiar concern.

Baptiste turned with somewhat of a sheepish look and said, with evident relief, in queer broken English, "Oh, notting, notting de matter, Mademoiselle Katie; only I tink dat Delphis and Madame Picard be a little scare'." To Baptiste the vivacious and supercilious little being was dearer than all the saints in the calendar; and well she knew it, and a sorry time, in consequence, 'e gave the poor fellow.

Katie Kimball had been Mademoiselle Severine's waiting-maid since her emancipation from the convent, during which time Baptiste's peace of mind had been seriously undermined, the loveliness of the little English girl having been dangerously fascinating to the big, simple-minded fellow. As has already been hinted, the sincerity of his affection for Katie was amply proven by his continuing to stay in a house where skeletons were harboured.

In religion Katie was a Protestant, but as there was no Protestant place of worship in the village she occasionally attended the great shrine.

A student of human nature would very quickly have described Katie's character as lacking depth, but exhibiting withal a great deal of natural shrewdness. To Baptiste, however, Katie was simply the acme of simplicity, frankness, gentleness, and learning. To tell the truth, Katie was in no wise averse to the good-looking, good-hearted fellow.

As she frequently poked fun at him for his superstitions, it was no wonder that Baptiste now looked

sheepish enough, and endeavoured to make out to her that it was Madame Picard and Delphis who were "scare'."

But if Baptiste was embarrassed at seeing Katie, Madame Picard decidedly was not. In answer to Katie's query, Madame said, as she drew the visitor into the room, "Dare is plenty ting de matter, Mademoiselle Katie; dat Baptiste has been read some awful ting out of de book dare, ting dat make de blood creep." She pointed at the book, and seated Katie at a respectful distance from it.

Katie, somewhat mystified by Madame's words and manner, turned her dangerous blue eyes on Baptiste and asked him to explain what was the matter.

Thus accosted, the expounder of mythological lore, and master of the English language, gnawed for a few moments at his dark moustache, looked appealingly at the fair questioner, raspingly cleared his throat three or four times, and then broke forth in the following lucid strain: "De trouble all come of dat book on de table which Monsieur d'Egmont bring home yesterday. It tell of plenty new religion, plenty new god, plenty new hell, and plenty new *diable*. I read dat book, and den bring it down here to read to Madame and Delphis. But so soon I get finish to read, Delphis say dat some bad ting going happen dis house, sure, right off; den Madame she's get scare', and—and—and I'm jus' de leas' bit scare' too; and den you come in. *Mon Dieu*, I'm wish I'm never see dat villain book some more."

With her comely little head tilted the least bit to one side, Katie walked over to the table, took up the book and glanced here and there at the pages. Presently she dropped the volume, and, with a laugh that intensified Baptiste's belief in her learning, said,

"Well, Baptiste Monette, I think you are very stupid: the book is simply a collection of fairy stories; I remember well reading something just like them when I was a little girl. These are stories for children, and there were never any such gods or miracles, and no people ever believed there were."

Good Madame Picard leaned her ample figure back on the chair with a sigh of relief that filled the room; while Baptiste looked at her who at one fell swoop had set at nought the doings of mighty Jove and the gods of his council (doings in which countless thousands had had as implicit faith as the thousands who yearly went to Bonne Ste. Anne), as though he thought her a monument of learning and wisdom. The truth was that Katie's education had been of the most superficial character, but Baptiste would willingly have fought anyone who had dared to make such an assertion in his hearing.

Made loquacious by the soothing sense of security, Madame Picard had just rolled her eyes to the ceiling and was about to call upon Bonne Ste. Anne to credit her with the fact that whatever others might have done she had never for an instant believed any miracles could be worked outside the pale of the Catholic Church, when Delphis, whose face had lost none of its tenseness, spoke again. Pointing once more at the volume, he said, with weird solemnity, "What I have said will come to pass: woe is about to fall upon this house; the book is full of evil and brings evil with it."

With a toss of the head which showed a world of contempt for such prophesying, Katie picked up the book and took it from the room. When she returned a few moments later, she saw Madame Picard had filled a goodly pot of tea from the blatant kettle

on the stove. The good body had hoped that under the influence of this soothing concoction the harmony of the evening would be restored. And it doubtless would, had it not been for old Delphis refusing to be mollified thereby, and continuing to sit cowering in a corner, muttering depressingly himself.

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CHAPTER VIII

A SINISTER INCIDENT

"To the generous mind
The heaviest debt is that of gratitude."

THE day set by Giovanni for his departure had at last arrived.

In Montreal it was hailed by Father Lacoste with great rejoicing; but, in Ste. Anne de Beaupré, Giovanni stood in the early morning of the unwelcome day, watching the sun rise out of the broad bosom of the St. Lawrence with feelings of regret and sadness. He knew that when the sun was setting behind the frowning hills which sheltered the favoured village he would be borne away from Severine—never had a day dawned so unwelcome to him before. But in life it is ever so: the smiling day which to one brings happiness and anticipation of still fuller joys, as surely for another lines the horizon of the future with menacing sorrows. In the totalling of life none are greatly favoured: the relentless marching hours surely come when those who have had their period of mourning are comforted and made to rejoice, while the burdens they have been bearing are transferred in turn to the shoulders of those who have had their period of rejoicing—thus, backward and forward, the pendulum of time slowly but surely swings, sorrow and joy, laughter and tears hovering for all in its train.

The fleeting June days had been full of gladness

to Giovanni, and had so cunningly knit his affection about Severine d'Egmont that he knew her companionship, through the years that were to come, was the one thing necessary to him in life. And yet each hurrying day passed with her had been unmarked by any startling incident. The weather had been fine, and the afternoons were nearly all spent in the garden, the ladies engaged in fancy-work, Giovanni reading to them; while the evenings had been almost exclusively devoted to music.

This close companionship with Severine, besides intensifying Giovanni's love, had strengthened his first impressions as to her intelligence, artistic temperament, and girlish worth—a worth which dawning womanhood was daily enhancing.

His love of the taxidermist's art deprived the ladies and their guest of much of Monsieur d'Egmont's company; but frequently at night, when Giovanni was playing, or teaching Severine, the courtly old gentleman was drawn from his den by the sound of the playing, and, leaving the silent friar, he would repair to the drawing-room. Very often Giovanni caught an expression of intense pride flit across the patrician face of his host as he sat and looked at his fair, high-bred daughter. Giovanni knew it was but natural that he should have such pride in her, and he could not understand why such evidences of deep parental affection should always cause him moods of depression.

How delightful and precious these musical evenings had been to Giovanni! They were the brightest memories of his short and closing visit, and would ever be remembered; for they would recall more vividly than anything else the days when love was being revealed to him in all its mastering power.

At times Severine had often seemed reserved and

beyond the influence of his unvoiced longings during the hours of the day; but when the evening came, when he had lost himself in the thralldom of his art, and when she had sat with averted face drinking in, like one fascinated, the bewitching strains of his violin, then his keen sympathies told him that her whole nature was full of tenderness, and that her heart at any moment might awake from the repose of girlhood and bow before love's dictatorial sceptre.

On this the last day of his visit Giovanni had risen early, and after watching the sun glorify the landscape, had slipped noiselessly out of the house. Going to the riverside, he walked very slowly along the steeply sloping land, till the house was left far behind, then, in absent way, he sat down on the rocky, precipitous bank of the river, and in saddened mood watched the great incoming waves as they moaned and rent themselves to spray on the rocks away below.

His thoughts were of Severine and Father Lacoste: he was passing through the struggle which has beset men and women from all time—the struggle between duty and love. He had disliked telling the d'Egmonts that his patron expected him to leave for France immediately upon his return to Montreal; and so now, when the day had come for parting with Severine, there had come the temptation to try to further postpone the trip abroad.

His fear was that, if they were so long parted, recollection of their acquaintance, so romantically brought about, might fade from her mind. Such a thought made his whole being rebel, and he murmured passionately, "It is impossible; I cannot leave without knowing whether she may learn to love me or not. She is necessary now to my art; I could not study with mind and heart dis-

tracted. The love of such a woman would be a perpetual inspiration and happiness to me. No, I cannot leave her." He partly rose, with a nervous gesture, as though the subject was definitely settled; but, as he did so, conscience swept down upon him and appealed resistlessly to his sense of all that was fair and just. It began by painting all the claims that Father Lacoste had upon him for consideration—claims to which honour could scarcely give a secondary place. Sinking again on the bank, and unheeding the roaring, tumultuous waves below him, which the rapidly rising tide and stiffening breeze were lashing into fury, Giovanni in changed mood listened to the stern mentor as it recalled the years of his boyhood and of his recent manhood, and also brought to memory how almost every good that had ever come to him could be traced to the old priest. Was kindness such as this to have no more generous return than partial deceit? He winced under the question; but such was the way conscience termed his conduct, in keeping Father Lacoste ignorant of the true motive detaining him in Ste. Anne.

Had Giovanni's thoughts been less absorbed, and the tumult of the waves less boisterous, he might have become aware of the slow approach of the huge, ungainly figure of Friar Jean Fontaine. Slouching at the friar's heels was the powerful mastiff, Pataud.

When within a dozen yards of Giovanni, Friar Fontaine paused, and, with lowering face, looked for many minutes at him as he sat on the brink of the precipice, all unconscious of the proximity of any human being. As the friar continued to gaze, the great brute caught sight of Giovanni, and uttered a low, sinister growl; but the breaking of the surf drowned the animal's voice before it reached the rapt thinker. The ferocity of the voice of the dog brought a still

more evil light into the face of the half-witted friar, and holding the animal in a grip of steel by the collar, he began to move, as though by some uncontrollable impulse, towards the reclining figure of the young musician. Silent-mouthed, the dog strained hard, in front of him, at its collar. Every step brought the roar of the waves clearer to the friar's ears, and drew him nearer to the precipice—where a push from a hand such as his, or an attack from an animal like Pataud, would mean the end of life to any living thing.

And yet Giovanni sat unconsciously on, wrapt up in the struggle within him.

It was not till the sinewy fingers of the friar were slowly releasing their hold of the mastiff that the conflict between heart and conscience chanced to come to an end, and, starting to his feet, Giovanni exclaimed resolutely, "No, I cannot disappoint him; it would be black ingratitude: come what may, I will repay some of his kindness, and leave immediately for France."

He stood, as he uttered the words, with his face turned to the broad expanse of water, and, as he turned, Friar Fontaine, with the quick cunning of the mentally afflicted, spoke sharply and warningly to the dog, which unwillingly fell behind him, and then he halted, as though he had only just caught sight of Giovanni.

"Ah, you are out early too," said Giovanni, in no little surprise, as he saw the friar.

"Out early, yes, out early," he answered very slowly.

Giovanni would have spoken again, but before he could do so the giant turned sullenly round and, calling to Pataud, strode away.

Giovanni stood and watched them till some trees

near by hid them, and then, with troubled face, turned and retraced his steps to the house. Try as he might, he could not shake off an impression of distrust of the friar that had come to him, and he began to recall how often he had unexpectedly met the fellow, and the strange behaviour of the crazed creature towards him. "Could it be possible," he thought, with a start, "that Friar Fontaine harbours some evil intent towards me?" But with the sunshine beautifying the landscape, and with the knowledge that he had never done the colossal creature any injury, such idea seemed preposterous, and a smile came to his lips at what he termed his fancifulness. By the time he reached the house the incident had gone entirely from his mind.

It had been arranged by Severine and her aunt that the last afternoon of Giovanni's stay—he was to leave at sunset—should be spent in driving and visiting some of the farmhouses in the surrounding district. The idea had originated with Severine. The truth was that she had missed in their visitor that depth of devotion to the Church so strongly characteristic of herself—and of most French Canadians—and was secretly hoping that it might be awakened when he should observe for himself the peaceful, happy lives of those who walked in faithful and unquestioning obedience to the mandates of the priests.

Giovanni, who was all unconscious of this missionary feeling towards him, had been cherishing a hope in regard to the drive in no wise as commendable as Severine's, and which was none other than that the elder lady, Mademoiselle Josephine, might not find it convenient to accompany her niece on the proposed visit. But a few fleeting hours remained, and he felt their pleasure would be

entirely spoiled if more than two persons spent them together.

Just as he had given up all hopes of being alone with Severine on the drive, word was unexpectedly brought to Giovanni that Mademoiselle Josephine d'Egmont—whose health was always so uncertain—was feeling indisposed, and she trusted that Monsieur Correggio and her niece would excuse her from accompanying them. It has to be confessed that the hardened lover sent back a most solicitous reply, although, at the very moment he was concocting it, his heart was beating with riotous happiness.

Baptiste, the famous anatomist, acted as coachman.

Driving eastward, they soon left the village behind, and presently imposing as well as quaint scenes were on every hand. Far above them, stretching into indistinct lines, were seen the unchangeable Laurentian hills; while nestling along their base were constantly being revealed oddly constructed French Canadian cottages, one storey in height, with peering dormer windows, and shutters massive and imposing enough to protect the Crown jewels of England. Making picturesque the landscape, too, were seen working barefooted in the fields young girls and women, their heads covered with immense straw hats, and their short strong figures clad in bright prints. By their side worked the men, ignoring all modern methods of sowing and reaping, and using implements of the most primitive description. Frequently meeting them on the narrow road were French hay-carts, utterly guileless of springs and drawn by oxen. Many of the carts were laden with products of the farm—portions of the peasants' labour which the law of the land ordered must be regularly taken to the

priests. Here and there by the roadside were large rustic crosses, which the *habitants* never passed without crossing themselves or stopping to pray.

Baptiste finally stopped the carriage at one of the primitive cottages, and Severine, with Giovanni close by her side, entered. Delightful as the drive had been, it had not won Severine's mind from its earnest intent to try to increase the religious zeal of her father's guest.

In answer to Severine's knock, the door had been opened by a typical French housewife, in her ample arms a black-eyed infant. With the usual politeness of the French Canadians, no matter what their walk in life, she had warmly invited the visitors to enter. Before seating herself on the wooden rocking-chair, which the good woman had dusted with much hurriedness, Severine stretched out her arms for the infant, which went gladly to her. As she sat and held the little one tight to her bosom with womanly tenderness, she was to Giovanni the personification of all that was dear and attractive in woman.

While the mother was extolling the precociousness of the babe to Severine, Giovanni was noting the peculiar decorations of the room. It was the main room of the house—the dining-room, which in all such cottages serves the varying uses of dining-room, parlour, sitting-room, and, in cases of stress, impromptu bedroom as well. In one corner he saw a large wooden cross. Near the cross, hanging from a nail, were the beads of the devout woman, speaking eloquently of much usage; while in another corner was suspended a bottle of holy water used for unnumbered purposes. When the heavens threatened lightning, it was sprinkled upon the threshold, and also sprinkled over it when the Evil One was purported to be abroad seeking the

hiding-places of the fear-stricken ones who for seven years had neglected to partake of the blessed sacrament—his intent being to turn them into the dread *loup garou* (weir wolf). Also attracting Giovanni's attention on the walls were numerous highly-coloured framed chromos of the Blessed Virgin, Bonne Ste. Anne, and many other saints. Directly facing him, on the opposite wall, was a big chromo of Napoleon, and pasted in the most friendly proximity to it, as large a picture of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

Giovanni's gaze travelled through the open window, and he could see near at hand the men and women labouring in the fields, placid content revealed in their slow, easy movements. The quiet and content of the homelike little cottage, the infectious gladness of the prattling mother, and the air of devotion which seemed to be breathed by everything around, had its influence upon him; and as he sat and mused there came to him that feeling (how many have had it who have striven to test, by reason, the mystery of all things!) that if by a wave of his hand he could change this docile, devout people into beings of the highest intellectual order, with their strivings and searchings after the truth, he would not do so.

Many other cottages were visited, and in each were seen almost the same emblems of respect and devotion to the Church; the same simple, primitive mode of living—invariably mingled with the same air of placid content of life. In every cottage the French tongue alone was spoken, and French customs alone met with—thanks to the Treaty of Paris, which has resulted in preserving in this vast colony of Her Majesty a people unchanged in customs and belief from the times of the Louises.

When the visits finally ended, and the homeward journey was begun, Severine, with feelings of keen enthusiasm, heard Giovanni break into earnest praise of the content and beauty of the lives of these simple people, and of the religion which could keep them so unsullied—even if so backward and primitive.

His words brought a glow of pleasure to her, and she dwelt with much earnestness upon the blessedness of being completely devoted to the Church to which they belonged.

As she talked on, her sensitive intuitions sudded, warned her that something foreign to the subject she was speaking of was stealing over Giovanni and diverting his thoughts. Looking quickly up, she saw a shadow of sadness on his face. He was looking towards the west, to which the sun was hurrying with pitiless haste. Could she have read his thoughts, she would have found he was wishing that he, like Joshua of old, could arrest the progress of the glowing orb.

In her zeal and earnestness, the nearness of the hour of his departure had escaped her; but it somehow came to her now as she caught the look on his face. For the first time since their intercourse an inexplicable shyness came over her, and her eyes also sought the west.

The silence which fell between them was at last broken by Giovanni, who said, in absent voice, without turning his head, "How relentless time is, Mademoiselle! In an hour or so I shall be compelled to leave behind all this beauty of nature and simplicity of life—they will be but memories."

She never remembered feeling before, that time was relentless, and it seemed strange to her she should suddenly think so now. Answering the

regret in his tone, she said slowly, "But, Monsieur, Ste. Anne de Beaupré is not so very far from Montreal, and I am sure Monsieur will always be made a welcome guest at my father's house."

Her words brought hurrying back to him the recollection of his mental struggle of the early morning, by the warring waves, and of his decision to be true to his sense of right and to Father Lacoste, and to leave for France without further delay; but the enthusiasm of self-sacrifice to duty and conscience, recently so strong, was now, in the presence of the one so dear to him, sadly wavering.

While he hesitated how to reply to her hospitable words, the noble, kindly face of Father Lacoste seemed to rise up before him and adjure him with pleading mien to put temptation away and to frankly tell her of his promise to go abroad immediately.

He had just made up his mind to follow this course, come what would, when the carriage turned a sudden bend in the road near her home, and a few moments later had halted before the house. As he helped her from the carriage, she indistinctly heard him murmur some words of appreciation of her invitation, and so got the impression that he had accepted it.

Upon parting with her in the hall, Giovanni went quickly to his room. The sun no longer beamed into it as it had in the early morn. Standing at the window, he sadly drew out his watch and looked regretfully at it—in one hour more his stay would be at an end! The tick of the fleeting seconds jarred ruthlessly on his nerves, and he shut the case vehemently.

As he stood erect and silent in the fading light, the fear that he might never win her, if he went away, struggled desperately with him. One moment

he was regretting he had not had time to tell her of his promise to the priest before they had arrived at the house, while almost at the very next he was feeling intense relief at not having done so. The mental conflict brought the irresistible longing for the soothing influence of music, and, hastily leaving the room, he went to the drawing-room, and taking up Severine's violin, began softly to play to himself the soothing refrain he had woven into the matchless composition which he had played the night she had first come into his life.

He had not been playing many minutes when a small white hand, unseen by him, was laid on the curtains, as though to draw them aside; but the minutes slipped on, and still they were not parted. Unconscious that he had a listener, Giovanni played on. Very wistful grew the girlish face in the shadow of the heavy curtains as the vividly remembered air stole through the room. From where she stood, she could just see the player's face bent over the instrument, and its look of great longing, tinged with sadness, peculiarly affected her. The wish came to her that he were her brother, and that she might steal into the room, slip down by his side as she sometimes did by her father's, and inquire into the cause of his care.

Twice she essayed to draw the curtains and enter; but the old witchery of his playing held her in breathless attention, and, fearful of interrupting, she listened on and on, till finally she saw him lay the instrument down and dejectedly pillow his dark cheek on his hand. The simple action, so full of sadness, brought instantaneously to her eyes what she dared not let him see, and, turning, she walked swiftly away.

Unaware of how near she had been to him, he sat

hoping she would come, that he might play to her once more before he went away. He waited in vain ; when the curtains presently parted, it was not by Severine, but by Monsieur d'Egmont, who came to ask his guest to the impromptu lunch prepared for his departure.

When Giovanni and his host entered the dining-room, the ladies were already awaiting them.

In a pause in the conversation during the meal, Monsieur d'Egmont, arresting the cup he was about to put to his lips, and turning to Giovanni, said, with much warmth in his polite, well-bred voice, " I trust, Monsieur Correggio, that we shall soon have the pleasure of having you visit us again ? "

The crucial moment for Giovanni had arrived. It was on his tongue to say that he must go abroad immediately, and that it might be long before he could again enjoy his host's hospitality ; but, as he wavered, fate stepped in, and left him no longer master of the situation. Turning to her father, Severine smilingly answered, " Monsieur Correggio, papa, has already, I think, accepted my invitation to shortly visit us again." She had noted Giovanni's slight hesitancy, and remembering the troubled look she had seen on his face in the parlour, and thinking that in the care which was evidently engrossing his mind he had not quite understood her father's words, had answered the fateful question for him.

The loved serious voice led Giovanni captive, and politely inclining his head to Monsieur d'Egmont, he said, with something like relief in his voice, " Monsieur is exceedingly kind, and I trust I shall soon see Ste. Anne again." Even as he spoke came the resolve to try to persuade Father Lacoste to consent to his postponing his return to France.

By the time lunch was over it was almost possible

for Giovanni to feel there had been a little unreasonableness in the promise his patron had exacted from him. When finally he bade his host good-bye, and held for a moment Severine's hand in his own and looked into the depths of her wistful eyes, the resolve not to go abroad until he had, at least, seen her once again, was firmly rooted in his mind.

When the carriage rolled away with him from the door, Severine, instead of re-entering the house, turned from her aunt and father and entered the garden. Seating herself near a bush of roses, she opened a volume she had chanced to bring with her at a marked page, and her eyes began to travel slowly over the lines. It may have been that the lines were difficult to comprehend, for they were read, re-read, and yet read again. The mischievous wind began to toss the leaves in sad disorder, hopelessly blurring the print; yet the eyes appeared not to heed but to be reading on. Even when the book slipped to her lap, she sat looking at the wind-tossed pages as though what she saw there was of the most absorbing interest.

In a distant part of the garden sat Friar Fontaine, his gleaming eyes watching her every motion. From his hiding-place he had seen her parting with Giovanni, her entrance into the garden, and her abstracted mood.

While he watched her, there broke upon the stillness the shrill whistle of a locomotive, and there flashed over his countenance a triumphant look. Starting to his feet, he ran, crouching through the thick undergrowth, to the end of the garden, where rose a hill almost completely hiding the house. Springing over the garden fence, he soon with powerful strides reached the summit of the

hill: in the distance the train which was rushing towards the station was plainly in view. Raising his hands, he began to wave them madly, as though he would hasten the train to its stopping-place. Not until the station had been reached, and the train took up its journey again, did his wild gestures cease. Then, standing as though carved out of granite, he watched, and watched, until the distance hid the train from view; then, with a shout of gladness, he turned and sped down the hill as sure-footed as a deer.

CHAPTER IX

TOLD AFTER MANY DAYS

"Fain, my lord,
Might I not pain thine ears by this unfolding."

A PROFOUND silence reigned over the presbytery sheltered by Notre Dame Church. The long watches of the night had come, and the priests, who all day had sat in the grated confessionals of the ancient edifice, listening to tales of wrongdoing, suffering, and unnumbered disappointed hopes, are no longer oppressed with the memory of human frailties—sleep, the great comforter and healer, reigns among them.

In the subdued light of Father Lacoste's study is revealed the same old-fashioned furniture, the music strewn about the organ, the quaintly bound books, the mediæval latticed windows, and the painted faces of the fathers who had wrought so mightily for the Church in doctrine, diplomacy, art—and the thousand other coveted graces which has given such import to the smile or frown of Rome.

The weather is somewhat chilly, and a fire glows in the grate and casts a ruddy light on the silent canvas faces. The glow falls caressingly also on a majestic figure seated in a massive carved chair drawn up before the fire.

The night has been long, and when three-score years and ten have filled their measure, sleep becomes

as imperious as in childhood—and so Father Lacoste slept.

His head droops against the back of the chair, and his hands, which show so clearly the blue veins, are clasped across his imposing breast. The thin halo around his shaven crown is very beautiful in its tender silver shade, and the glow from the fire enhances its beauty. Age has not very deeply lined the broad, fine brow, and but scarcely robbed the face of the strength of mature manhood. In its repose the countenance is deeply serene, and there is about it that which speaks stronger than words of a character grown charitable and beautiful with age.

The priest's thoughts, all through the day and long night, had scarce for a moment been absent from Giovanni; for this was the day set by Giovanni for his return from Ste. Anne de Beaupré. The priest had known it would be late when the train arrived, and had not meant to sleep; but, like the disciples of old, slumber had mastered him.

The clock in the tower of the presbytery had just awakened the echoes of the early morn by striking the hour of one, when the door of the study was abruptly opened, and Giovanni, with a look of expectancy and gladness on his face, silently entered the room. The priest's chair was turned from the door, and Giovanni did not see the sleeper till he had softly turned up the lamp, which had burned very low. Then, stealing quickly to his side, he looked for a space fondly into the old man's face, and then, laying his hand on the broad shoulders, whispered, "*Père—père.*"

The voice immediately brought back consciousness, and, springing to his feet, Father Lacoste drew

the young man affectionately to him, exclaiming, "*Mon cher Giovanni.*"

Ere Giovanni could speak, the priest released him for a moment, hurried over to the lamp, turned it to full height, and then, hastening back to his visitor, held him at arm's length, quizzically inspecting him, his head now on one side and then upon the other.

Giovanni looked at the priest, a fine light in his eyes.

"Now," said the priest, with intense satisfaction, "what did I tell you? Was I not a good prophet? Can not our Bonne Ste. Anne minister to diseased minds as well as to bodies? Why, your every look speaks content and happiness."

Pausing, and closing his eyes, the priest whispered thanksgivings to the benignant saint. When he looked up, he saw Giovanni had, unexpectedly, seated himself, and that his face was turned away from his direction. It caused him no concern; he simply thought the young man must suddenly have felt fatigued. Seating himself by Giovanni's side, he went on, with longing in his tones: "If you are not too tired, Giovanni, I should like to hear how the blessing came—I shall never cease to give Ste. Anne thanks."

With troubled face, Giovanni was looking into the fire, almost wishing now that his new-found happiness had indeed come from Ste. Anne, so that he could have made glad the grand old man with details of a miraculous cure, and coupled the news with a ready acquiescence to return at once to Paris. As was customary with him when mentally distressed, his hand began nervously to brush back from his forehead the dark clustering hair. His lack of frankness to the old priest in not

having acquainted him with the true reason of his desire to remain at Ste. Anne, and the recollection that he had promised to return shortly again to the home of the d'Egmonts, now came back to memory with disquieting vividness.

The observant eyes of the old priest chanced to catch the changed expression on Giovanni's face, and something like a look of alarm came into his own. Bending forward, and resting his hand on Giovanni's knee, he said, "Your face was ever an open book to me, Giovanni. Something I have said has troubled you. Is it that I have been a little hasty in concluding that all I had hoped had come to pass?"

The shadow in Giovanni's eyes only increased at the question, and the priest went on, with a lightness of tone in which his heart had no part: "You need rest, Giovanni. To-morrow we shall have plenty of time; you can tell me all about it then. You know, my boy" (he drew still nearer the young man), "you know I never was a taskmaster. If—if it did not happen, and the unrest and longing is still in your heart, we can bear it, Giovanni; you are with me again, and you know what that means to me. By and by this fancy will surely be forgotten, and all your thoughts will once more be enthralled only by your art. It will only mean that I shall have to wait a little longer for the homage which the world will surely give you."

The gracious, wistful words went straight home, and unsealed Giovanni's lips. Claspings the old man's hand, he said unsteadily, "No, not to-morrow, *père*; I must tell you to-night. I fear I have that to say that will cause you pain."

Father Lacoste shook his head, as though such a

thing from the speaker were completely impossible. Giovanni felt a slight tremor in the aged hand resting on his knee, and it increased the hardness of the task before him as no upbraiding words could have done.

He made no preface; he felt that he could not. "I have seen her, *père*," he said abruptly, "she who came into my life the past Christmas Eve; she whose face has never since been absent from my mind."

"Ah yes, you have seen her, Giovanni?" There was no astonishment in the query, nor was there any inflection of pain or anger; but the aged eyes were turned quickly to the floor, lest they might involuntarily betray the pain in them.

"I met her, *père*, by accident; met her in the very church to which you took me. She was at the foot of the statue, where I had promised you to pray for release from her haunting memory. When my eyes fell upon her, I knew it would be useless for me to pray; my lips could not have refrained from uttering thanksgivings had I knelt before the statue. We came face to face as she sprang from the foot of the statue to save a young girl, who was dying from consumption, from falling to the floor. My new happiness you read in my face after the service was over. In your gladness at what you surmised had happened, you turned and gave covert thanks to Bonne Ste. Anne. But I knew, *père*, it was for something that had not occurred. For the first time in my life I was not perfectly frank with you. At the time, I had not the heart to tell you the truth, and comforted myself with the thought that I would tell you all later on. But, as you know, you were called suddenly away. When telling you, as you were leaving, of my desire to remain for a

time at Ste Anne, I again felt I could not explain all."

While speaking, Giovanni had been looking steadily into the fire, but his manner, which had been somewhat restrained, now changed, and turning impulsively to the priest, he went on, with an enthusiasm he could not master: "If you knew her, *père*, as I now do, you would not wonder that a mere look into her face affected me as it did; she is a noble, beautiful girl. But better than her beauty, her youth, her grace of person, and good birth, she has an intelligence, sincerity of disposition, and personality that has affected me more deeply than any beauty could have done.

"I was introduced to her the day after your departure from Ste. Anne, and have been in her company every day since. *Père*, what was fancy is now reality: I love her. My whole being tells me that I cannot wrench this passion from my heart, and so I want your consent to my remaining over for a little longer; I must know if there is any hope of her ever returning my affection. When I ascertain this, I will return at once to Paris, no matter what her reply to me may be. A union with one such as she, *père*" (he was speaking very rapidly and earnestly now), "instead of hindering my musical future, would be the speedy stepping-stone to triumph; hers is a nature, I know, that will not take from, but add to, any gifts I may have. I owe you much, *père*,—everything I have in the world or ever shall have,—and I know that your wishes should have precedence over my own; but I ask you to believe that the happiness of my whole life is bound up in this girl, and to relieve me for the present of my promise of returning to France and completing the few months of study which remain to me. For my lack of

frankness, *père*, in letting you leave Ste. Anne as I did, I can offer no proper excuse; perhaps the fact that I never before sought to hide the slightest thing from you may plead for me." There was a sincerity in his closing words which none could have doubted.

Slowly raising his eyes to the young man, Father Lacoste said, with sympathetic kindness, "You need nought to plead with me for you, Giovanni; from your boyhood it has been as natural for you to be frank with me as to breathe. You have been frank again: if for a few days you refrained from telling me what I now know, I am sure it was as much out of dislike to distress me as for any other reason." He hesitated, and there was a pained look in his eyes as he went on: "Giovanni, a great passion has come into your life and possesses you entirely. Yet, be that passion what it may, I cannot be unsympathetic with you. From the day you entered my life I cannot remember refusing you anything that would be for your good. But I am depressed, Giovanni, and I would that I could shake off the presentiment that ill may come to you through this love. I cannot analyse and account for the feeling; perhaps it may be caused by the fear that the great gifts you possess will, instead of being helped, be retarded by the cares which the married state so frequently involves. Disappointment, too, at your unwillingness to immediately return to France may also tinge my forebodings." His manner changed again, and he continued, with an effort at lightness, "Or perhaps, Giovanni, my heart conjures up woe in order to drown a feeling of cruelty in desiring to deprive you of what you are so sure will make you happy."

Appreciating, with his sensitive temperament, all the kindness and generosity of the priest in thus

receiving his confession, Giovanni said huskily, "The nobility of your nature, *père*, should have won greater consideration from me than I have had the strength to give."

The priest stretched out his hand for Giovanni's, and together they sat looking in silence at the fire. Presently the priest asked slowly, "Does she know you love her, Giovanni?"

"No," replied Giovanni haltingly; "she is but eighteen, and to the subject of loving and being loved I am sure she has given but little thought."

Father Lacoste sat pondering, the feeling growing in his mind that he must accede to Giovanni's request and to his postponing his visit abroad, when it came to him, like a flash, that in the warmth of their conversation Giovanni had omitted to mention the name of the lady, and, turning to him, he asked, "You have forgotten to tell me her name, Giovanni. You mentioned her as being of good family. Was she one of the visitors, from abroad, at the shrine?"

Giovanni turned and looked at the priest with an expression of astonishment, and answered, "It is strange I should have forgotten to mention her name; my omission must have been due to the impression that you knew her—an impression caused by the letter you gave me, and which led to my introduction to her. The letter, you remember, was to Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont, and she is his daughter—Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont. I"—

But further words died on the speaker's lips; for as the name of Severine d'Egmont fell on the ears of Father Lacoste he started to his feet with a low cry of consternation.

"His daughter! the daughter of the patrician, Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont!" interjected the priest, aghast.

The words and manner of the priest thrilled Giovanni with an indefinable dread. He rose hurriedly. Looking into the face of the distressed old man, he answered apprehensively, "Yes, *père*, Monsieur d'Egmont's daughter. I do not understand; why do you look and speak in this strange way?"

A great sadness came over the priest's face, and he replied with a world of pity, as he looked into the troubled, handsome countenance searching his, "Giovanni, you could not marry the daughter of Gustave d'Egmont were you the greatest master of your art who ever lived, and if you possessed the wealth of Croesus." Claspings his hands, he continued: "Ah, how true, Giovanni, are coming my strange presagings of sorrow for you on account of this passion!"

Giovanni stood grasping the back of his chair, waiting in tense suspense and whitening face for the priest to continue.

Seeing the agony in his face, Father Lacoste went over to him and said, in a voice which meant to be calm and comforting, but which still trembled, "You were always brave, Giovanni, and I know you will not flinch now, nor take too deeply to heart that which I must, at last, make known to you. The healing years pass rapidly, and you are young, and strength will come to live down this love. The Master Himself has said that he who can overcome himself is greater than he who can take a city."

The words brought no change in the look of Giovanni's face, nor wavering of his intent gaze into the eyes of the priest.

"I have known Monsieur d'Egmont," went on the priest, after a trying pause, "for a number of years; but of his daughter I knew very little, she being

in convents during most of the time of my acquaintance with Monsieur."

The speaker ceased, and sat down, as though he needed all his strength to continue. Giovanni stood motionless by his side.

Pointing to the rug at his feet, Father Lacoste looked up and said, "If you stand, Giovanni, in that still way, it will make it very hard for me. Sit down at my feet; you remember how you loved to do so when you were a boy—would you were one still, and that I could still protect you from disappointment and trouble!"

Touched by recollections of the past thus called up, and seeing the pain in the noble, kindly old face, Giovanni slipped down by the old man's side, and rested his head, in a way well remembered, against the arm of his chair.

The priest stroked the dark curly hair in silence for many minutes, and then began slowly: "Even up to a year or so ago, when Monsieur d'Egmont chanced to speak to me of his daughter, he always referred to her as a child. I certainly thought of her only as such when I gave you the note to her father, and I never dreamed it was her face you had seen that Christmas Eve.

"The importance of what I have to tell you lies in something I must explain about Monsieur d'Egmont, and reveal also about yourself; and how certain prejudices, powerful as honour itself, in Monsieur d'Egmont, will make your union with his daughter an utter impossibility."

Giovanni moved as though he were about to speak, but he did not do so, and Father Lacoste continued: "During your stay with the d'Egmonts, Giovanni, you must have noticed that their mode of addressing each other, coupled with many of their

mannerisms, were more in accord with Parisian customs than with Canadian. Monsieur d'Egmont is sometimes spoken of as a Canadian, but the truth is he is a French nobleman and comes of a race of patricians. His family was one of those that suffered the most severely during the Commune of 1871. At that time Monsieur d'Egmont chanced to be absent from Paris, and, ere he could return, his wife, a lady whose family was also of high rank, had fallen a victim to the guillotine. Her loss, and the death of other members of his family, so embittered him against the land of his birth, that he left France for ever, and came to Canada, with his eldest sister, Josephine, and a younger sister named Marie. For a few years Monsieur resided in Quebec, but finally removed to the village of Longueuil, where he purchased an old and historic manor-house, and made it his home. His house at Ste. Anne de Beaupré is, as you know, only his summer abode.

"Five years after his arrival in this country, and while in Quebec, Monsieur d'Egmont again married. Two years after this second union Severine d'Egmont came into the world, her mother dying when she was three months old, leaving Monsieur d'Egmont a widower once more. Monsieur d'Egmont's two sisters, who were still with him, now took care of the little one.

"In Paris Monsieur d'Egmont had the title of Count, but after his arrival in this country he rarely used it. From the first, however, he evinced an unusual regard for what he believed was the pre-eminence of birth—never making a friend of the rich, or even famous, if lowly born.

"Josephine d'Egmont, his eldest sister, had also something of this pride of birth—a pride, though, which a tender, womanly disposition kept from being

unjust But Monsieur's youngest sister, Marie, was entirely lacking in this characteristic, as what I am about to relate demonstrates—as well as reveals—pride's overwhelming power over Monsieur d'Egmont.

"When about twenty years of age, Marie became greatly attached to Rudolph Drolet, a young French Canadian advocate of much promise. Although not of noble family, he was of good parentage. When made aware of the affection which had sprung up between his sister and the advocate, Monsieur d'Egmont exhibited the greatest humiliation, and, after a bitter interview with the young girl, wrote the lover informing him that he must keep up no further intimacy with the young lady, whose birth was such as to allow of no hope whatever of an alliance with the Drolet family.

"History in the case of the young people simply repeated itself: Marie married the young man, without the consent of her brother. From the moment she left her brother's house its doors were closed against her, despite all the efforts and pleadings of Josephine d'Egmont to effect a reconciliation. To the last, Monsieur d'Egmont was unyielding. The young couple moved away from Canada, the husband dying suddenly two years later. After his death, the young wife again wrote a pleading letter begging for reconciliation, but time had brought no change in the feelings of Monsieur d'Egmont.

"But despite this relentless characteristic, Giovanni, Monsieur d'Egmont is a man of natural kindly disposition and of very broad culture. I think I never met a man more truly courteous. Of late years a certain absent-mindedness, arising from his absorbing study of taxidermy, coupled with his natural politeness, has made it almost impossible for one to guess

at the indomitable strength of purpose underlying his mannerisms. So much, Giovanni, for Monsieur d'Egmont's character. Now as to how it concerns you. Some years ago, Monsieur d'Egmont was recalling on one occasion, with his old bitterness, the disgrace brought upon his family by his young sister, when the conversation chanced to turn upon his daughter Severine, who was then in the convent, and he took the occasion to say that if by any chance she should ever disgrace her family, as his sister had done, he would cut her, for ever, from his life, flesh of his flesh though she might be. 'I would sooner,' he broke out, 'a thousand times, see her dead than contaminated by an unequal marriage.'

As Father Lacoste paused, Giovanni moved restlessly, and looking at the old man in a peculiar way, said, in a restrained, hesitating tone, "And, *père*, am I too lowly born to dare to aspire to Mademoiselle Severine? Who am I? What is my birth? I must be a gentleman born, as you have told me I was a son of an old friend of yours, that both my parents were dead, and that you had adopted me."

The anxiety in the tone of the speaker made the priest wish, as he had never done before, that what he must now tell had been revealed to Giovanni when he was a boy, and not at a time when it meant the blotting out of all that was most precious to him.

Rising, the priest walked about in a troubled way for many minutes.

Giovanni still reclined against the chair, a dread stealing over him which he could not shake off.

As the priest continued silent, Giovanni turned to him and said, "You told me, *père*, that you had something to reveal about myself, something which,

on account of the prejudices of Monsieur d'Egmont, would render my union with his daughter an impossibility. Has what you wish to say to me to do with my birth?"

Father Lacoste, without replying, walked over to his chair again, seated himself heavily, and began, after a long silence: "One bitterly cold night in December, Giovanni, over nineteen years ago, shortly after I had been installed in this church, I received a summons, late in the night, to go to Notre Dame Hospital, to give the last sacraments to a man who had been run over on the streets. On arriving, I found the man unconscious, and from the nature of his injuries it was but too apparent that the sands of life had all but run their course. I stayed with him for a long time, hoping consciousness would return, but it showed no signs of doing so. The physicians were doubtful if it ever would. I had to go at last, but left instructions that I was to be sent for at once if reason showed signs of returning. The night had grown wild and stormy while I had been in the hospital, and when I reached the street the wind was sweeping along it like a wild thing, driving before it dense clouds of snow, which the storm, in its fury, had whipped into fragments fine as flour. I was soon chilled through. It was a night long to be remembered. When I reached the old church beside the presbytery, I kept close to the steps for shelter. Just as I was about to pass the last door of the edifice, and turn into the presbytery, I stumbled against something, and as I did so a child's cry reached me. A moment later I had gathered up in my arms, from the steps, a little boy not more than four years of age. Holding him tightly to my breast, I ran into the presbytery and up to my room. There I found that both the little feet and hands

were frost-bitten, but I had been in time to save him from very serious injury. He was a grand little fellow, Giovanni, with great dreamy dark eyes, and round beautiful face. The moment the light shone upon him I yearned over him as would a father. As he lay that night in a little bed close to my own, I kept the light burning that I might see him as he slept.

"Before he awoke next morning I was summoned again to the hospital. I found that the injured man had regained consciousness, but he was dying. As I entered the ward his glazing eyes brightened, and he huskily called me to come to him. I saw his mind was deeply troubled, and as I knelt by his side he spoke as though he feared he might die before he could acquaint me with what was burdening him. He told me he was an Italian organ-grinder, that he was utterly friendless, and had lived for many years in the deepest poverty. The accident had befallen him while he was looking for his little son, who had wandered away in the storm the previous night, and who was lost. The dying man hid nothing from me: the boy, he confessed, had been born to him by an Italian woman, in Italy, a woman in his own hard station of life, and who—who—had been weak enough to not insist upon marriage sanctioning their bonds."

The speaker paused; Giovanni sat motionless.

"The dying man," continued the priest in a still lower voice, "was intensely anxious that I should put forth every effort to find the child and place him in some institute where he would be guarded from want. It was only after his story was finished that a suspicion entered my mind—I had somehow never imagined it possible that so unhappy and destitute a being could have any con-

nection with the noble little fellow I had carried to my room the night previous.

"The man was rapidly sinking, and the temptation came to me that it would be useless to go for the child, as the sufferer would be dead when I returned; I was craving to for ever have a doubt as to whether or not he could have claimed relationship to the boy, had he seen him.

"But I was a priest, and my duty was clear. I returned to the presbytery, and brought the child back with me. The little one knew the dying man the moment he saw him, and, breaking away from me, ran to his bedside. Hovering on the border of the grave as the man was, he knew the child, and his lips moved. The boy rested his head on the bed and began to cry bitterly. The sound of his grief made the flame of life flash up for a few moments ere it was extinguished for ever: the dying eyes were turned on the child with a look of recognition; the pallid lips moved again and distinctly uttered the boy's name twice. They closed for ever with the words, 'My poor, poor little son!'"

Silently the priest leaned back against the chair, as though the narration of the story had tested his strength to the utmost.

Rising, in slow, mechanical way, Giovanni stood for a time gazing at the rug at his feet as though much interested in its peculiar pattern, and finally said, in measured, tense voice, "Yes, I understand, *père*; it is all very clear."

Ceasing abruptly, and partially turning to the priest, he went on in the same hard, suffering way: "You did not repeat what name it was the man called the boy; it was unnecessary, of course; who he was is too clearly pointed out—the name was Giovanni Correggio."

There was such a depth of agony in the whispered suffering voice, that Father Lacoste would have given the world could he but have said the boy and the dying man had not been related.

Suddenly Giovanni's manner changed, and, stretching out his hands, he said brokenly, "*Père, père*, it would have been pain enough to have known that I was the son of a street musician, but illegitimate; an object of pity to the world, an—an—Oh, my God, the disgrace is greater than I can bear!"

The intensity of the outburst brought a quiver of pain to the countenance of Father Lacoste, and starting to his feet, he said, with shaking voice, "For the Virgin's sake, Giovanni, do not take it to heart so terribly; this secret is known to none but you and me. I have kept it from you all these years, and it should never have been revealed could I still have hid it; but it had to be revealed; you said you must win her, and I knew there was that which would make your suit hopeless. Should you ask Monsieur d'Egmont for permission to win his daughter, he would immediately demand the clearest proofs of your birth and antecedents. Now he simply knows that you are a boy whom I adopted—nothing more. Once he knew all, he would surely acquaint her whom you love so dearly with the truth. You know how sensitive you are, and how great would be the pain at the knowledge that this had been told her. Monsieur d'Egmont would immediately forbid you any further intercourse with any member of his family. I was compelled, as you see, to prevent such humiliation to you."

Looking up into the handsome face, so fraught with anguish, the priest continued, the fine outlines of his face standing clearly out in the

flickering firelight: "Take comfort and courage, Giovanni; but few in the world have such unrelenting ideas of birth as Monsieur d'Egmont, and as surely as you sorrow this day, a time will come when families more ancient and noble than Monsieur d'Egmont's will deem an alliance with Giovanni Correggio an honour; for great genius is above all birth and wealth. You are passing through the darkness; but after darkness, Giovanni, ever comes the dawn. My heart bleeds to see you suffer like this, and memory recalls your boyhood, such a bright and happy one, spent day after day, with your violin, in my study. Even in those days you seemed in your imaginative way to live by music. You made the study a home. You can never know all you have been to me. Those of us who devote our lives to the Church, and leave none behind us to bear our names, have crosses to bear peculiar to ourselves. It means much, Giovanni, to be deprived of the joy of looking forward to the day when those who are the bone of our bone shall lend us their arms when the burden of years begins to weigh heavily. But the Blessed Mother was singularly good to me, and you were sent into my life, and have been all to me that a son ever could be. I have watched you, Giovanni, grow from boyhood to manhood's estate; watched the unfolding and developing of your mind; guarded with jealous care the steady growth of your exceptional genius, never doubting that the world would some day bow in glad homage to it."

The speaker's tone changed to sadness, and he continued, with hurried anxiety: "And now, Giovanni, when the years of waiting are all but gone, and when the day of your triumph has all but arrived, another life crosses yours and threatens to sweep

away all my cherished hopes. God knows I would not distress you; but to-night I could cry aloud in my disappointment. Giovanni, I plead with you; if not from dread of what I have revealed to you being imparted to her you love, and if not from dread of her father's bitter reproaches, I beseech you by the memory of the happy days of your boyhood, and by the memory of the hopes I have nursed so long in regard to you, indulge no further this mad passion, but leave immediately for Paris, conclude your studies, and give the world the benefit of the genius God has given you."

Giovanni looked into the pleading, anxious face with an expression that quickly eased the lines of care on the dignified countenance, and said tenderly, "If the memory, *père*, of past kindnesses should inspire gratitude, and the recollection of unwonted love and sympathy, give comfort in hours of distress, they should certainly do so to me; never until to-night did I really know how much I was indebted to you. To save me from pain you have tried for years to hide from me the truth of my birth and antecedents. Your interest in me was always wonderful, even when I was under the impression that it was because of friendship for my father that you adopted me and gave me a father's kindness; but how much more wonderful it is when I know that instead of being the son of a gentleman, and a dear friend of yours, I am a strolling beggar's son, one whose birth is besmeared and"—

"Nay, Giovanni, nay, nay!" The fingers suddenly pressed across the speaker's lips smothered further humiliating words.

When the seal was removed, Giovanni, with a vehement, unexpected change of mood, went on: 'Ah, *père*, would to Heaven you had chosen one

more worthy on whom to bestow a lifetime's kindness; for even while I recall all my indebtedness to you, my love is up in arms against what you desire, and is urging me to face whatever may happen for the sake of—her!" He turned aside, his face working in deep distress.

"It is ever thus with us all, Giovanni," broke in the priest gently; "temptations will come, but we can have grace to overcome them. I know your heart, know the depth of your gratitude, and know that you will choose the nobler part."

Turning quickly round, Giovanni broke out with a ring of resolve, as he faced the old man: "What is right I will do, *père*! The years of the past shall not be forgotten. Love shall not make me forget all I owe you, nor lead me to humiliate myself in the eyes of Monsieur d'Egmont, nor of her who is so much to me. Your wish shall be gratified; I will go at once abroad, give myself up to my studies, and try to forget."

With infinite pride, the priest drew himself up and said, in slow, dignified tones, "I knew, Giovanni, I should not be disappointed in you."

As he was speaking, the tones of a bell were heard in a distant part of the old structure, and with a start the priest stepped to Giovanni's side and said, "The first bell to summon the priests to early prayers, Giovanni—four o'clock. Go at once to your room and rest; the day has been long and fraught with many burdens to you."

Giovanni looked tired and worn as he answered, "I will go soon, *père*; but I feel that I should like to be alone for a few moments, alone here in the old room, to think it over—the past and the future."

"You will not let the thinking be too long, Giovanni?"

"No, *père*, not too long."

"Then good-night, my son, and the Holy Mother give you rest and peace." As he spoke, he raised his hands, and Giovanni bowed low his head beneath them to receive the blessing.

A few measured steps, a rustling of priestly robes, and Giovanni was alone.

Going to the lamp, Giovanni turned it low, drew a chair to the fire, and leaning heavily upon the carven arms, gazed long and steadily into the coals. He began to recall all that Father Lacoste had told him of the prejudice which dominated Monsieur d'Egmont in regard to birth, to think over his own worse than lowly origin, and to weigh all it would cost to cut Severine d'Egmont out of his life. From what he had just learned, he believed she was for ever lost to him; he dared not tell her the secret which now lay so heavily upon him, and yet it would be dishonourable to continue his attentions to her without acquainting her with it. The old days of dispassionate content that had been his before he had met her he knew were gone, never to return. "Yet I must forget her, I must forget her," he repeated restlessly to himself.

He tried to dismiss her from his thoughts, and to fortify himself by thinking of the renewal of his studies, and by calling up possible triumphs in his art; yet somehow these fancies, which once had been able to fire his ambition, had lost their potency now. The realisation that they could no longer rouse enthusiasm was sorely dispiriting; and so his thoughts presently wandered off to Ste. Anne de Beaupré, and he began to recall the happy week he had spent in the mediæval village with Severine d'Egmont—days that must always be indelibly printed on his memory.

Passing from the memories of these halcyon days, fancy pictured the future, if only Severine were to share it with him; and with a quickening at the heart, he began to conjure up journeyings with her in foreign lands, their poetical natures entranced by nature's handiwork in cloud-capped mountain, imposing torrent, and mirroring lake; and to picture, anon, wanderings through quaint ancient towns with people picturesquely clad. Then, still further into the future travelled fancy, and he saw the one so dear to him, in the ripeness of full gracious womanhood, with all the powers of her comprehensive mind fully developed, and in sympathy and harmony with all his ideals—a fount of perpetual inspiration.

A restless glowing coal fell noisily through the bars of the grate. Had the noise been a peal of thunder it could not have more effectually swept away the air-castles he had been building, and recalled him more abruptly to his surroundings. For a moment he looked in bewilderment around the room, and then, becoming conscious that it had all been but fancy, dejectedly turned to the fire again. Resting his head against the chair, he looked again into the coals, which were now beginning to cast dim and fitful shadows athwart his face, and dreamily began to conjure up, from the fire, the lineaments of her sweetly serious face; and, as he did so, feature by feature, as though by some magician's wand, rose slowly from amid the coals, until at last the dear intellectual countenance was as distinct and clear as though it were not fancy, and she were before him in the flesh. As he looked into the wistful pictured eyes, there slowly but unmistakably dawned a light in them he had never seen before; a light that was ever in his own

when he was in her presence—a light dearer to a lover than even whispered vows.

On the tired face resting against the chair now shone an exquisite look of gladness. The fire gradually died out, and left the room dark and cheerless; but the look of content did not fade from the handsome face. His lips moved, and there came dreamily from them the whispered words, "Once, once more, *père*, and then—then Paris."

Hours after, when Father Lacoste entered the room, he found Giovanni asleep in the old chair, with a smile of happiness on his lips that he had not seen there for many days.

CHAPTER X

TO LOVE'S DICTATION

"Love, sole lord and monarch of itself,
Allows no ties, no dictates of its own.
To that mysterious arbitrary power,
Reason points out and duty pleads in vain."

"SEVERINE, I fear you are spending too much of your time in the house practising. You really must take more fresh air; the confinement is making your eyes heavy, and it seems to me you have been depressed of late."

It was lunch-time, and Monsieur d'Egmont was seated at the table with his sister and daughter, while near one of the windows stood Friar Jean Fontaine looking impassively out at the river. Upon hearing the words an alert expression crossed the friar's face, and he inclined his head in a listening attitude to catch Severine's reply.

"It is but your fancy, papa," replied Severine, with a quick rush of colour. "I am not depressed, and staying a little more indoors is not affecting my health."

Before her father had addressed her, she had been sitting silently at the table, the wistful expression of her countenance more noticeable than usual. Her face also had not its wonted colour.

In spite of her reply, Monsieur d'Egmont looked at her with some concern, and seeing he was not convinced, Severine, with a quick change of manner,

continued laughingly, "You know, papa, you are always imagining things about me."

As during the remainder of the meal she was unusually bright and talkative, Monsieur d'Egmont, in his accustomed absent way, decided that his idea as to her health must have been but fancy, and the moment the meal was over he stole off to his den again, with a contented mind, to try a new process of stuffing specimens.

When her brother had gone, Josephine d'Egmont looked anxiously at her niece, and said, "I think Gustave is right, Severine, you must certainly not confine yourself in the house so much; it is days since you were out for a drive." She crossed over to Severine, and laying her hand on the girl's glorious brown hair, said gently, "I have thought that there has been something on your mind during the past few days. Am I wrong, dear?"

Rising and putting her arm around her aunt's waist, Severine said, as she drew her towards the door, "You are getting as fanciful as papa about me, aunty. My life, as you know, has been almost without a trouble, and"—

The remainder of the sentence was lost to Friar Fontaine by the door closing behind the two ladies. He stood looking in the direction they had gone, his weak face expressing peculiar concern.

After leaving the dining-room, Josephine d'Egmont exacted a promise from Severine that, if she would not drive that afternoon, she would at least spend an hour or two in the garden.

Parting with her aunt, Severine went first to the drawing-room, and took up her violin, holding it in her hands for many minutes, and looking absently down—her thoughts evidently far away from the instrument. Finally, raising her head with an

impatient motion, she took up the bow and began to play from a sheet of exercises in front of her. But the practice only lasted for a few minutes; soon the lovable face drooped closer over the violin, and, forgetful of the exercises, she began to play from memory parts of the serenade, "*Le Réveil de l'Amour*,"—the passionate composition Giovanni had played to her in the same room, and which had affected her so differently from sacred music.

As she played, the wistfulness of her face began to fade, and into it came something of the beautiful expression it wore when Giovanni had revealed all the emotions of the composition to her heart.

After a time her eyes chanced to wander to the neglected exercises, and with a sigh she abruptly laid the instrument down. Walking across the room, she took a bunch of flowers from a vase, fastened them on her bosom, and taking a pair of scissors, entered the garden. As though determined to shake off the depressing mood which now so frequently mastered her, she flitted unhesitatingly from one flower bed to another, clipping here and there obtrusive weeds, and tying up flowers that had not strength to stretch out to the sunlight. She worked zealously for a time; but the steady snip of the scissors by and by was heard less frequently, and soon their sound ceased altogether. When at last they slipped from her hands, they left her kneeling before a thick bush of roses. Her clasped hands now lie idly on her lap, and again thought absorbs her so completely that she is unconscious of how quickly the minutes are fleeing, and unconscious, too, of the click of the garden gate and the subdued crunch of approaching footsteps. Soon he who had entered the garden is

standing directly behind her and looking lovingly down at the meditative figure. As he was about to speak her name, and thus make known his presence, a line, which seemed peculiarly appropriate to her, came to his mind, and he quoted softly, "In maiden meditation, fancy free!"

"Monsieur Correggio!"

She stood before him for a moment visibly surprised, and then, quickly turning away, said, as she stooped to find the scissors, "I—you surprised me, Monsieur."

He stood in silence. His heart seemed to cease beating. Was it mad fancy, or in that fleeting look from her eyes had he really seen a counterpart of the expression that had stolen from them into his the night he had conjured up her face out of the glowing coals in Father Lacoste's study?

She was long in finding the scissors, and he waited breathlessly for her to turn again, that he might see if it were indeed the same expression, or whether or not he were once more but the victim of an hallucination.

The truant scissors were found finally, and she turned to him; but now neither in her expression nor bearing was there anything to encourage the hope which the face pictured in the firelight had aroused in him. There was, it is true, a slight flush on her cheeks, but the exertion of seeking for the scissors might have caused that.

She could not but notice the sudden disappointment in his face, and said quickly—and not with perfect composure—as she held out her hand to him, "Monsieur is very welcome."

His lips uttered some commonplace, and they moved towards the house. He told her his visit would extend for two days. He had seen her in

the garden as he was about to enter the house, and made bold to come where she was.

There was a pleased look on her face when she heard he was not to return immediately, and she answered quickly, "Papa will be very happy to see Monsieur; he was speaking about you only this morning."

Monsieur d'Egmont, who took note of time only as it heralded the arrival of some new specimen, welcomed Giovanni in his absent way, questioning him about Montreal and Father Lacoste as though he had not seen his guest for many months. Giovanni frankly told him that he was to go abroad almost immediately, and his host courteously wished him every success in the future. As they were talking, Josephine d'Egmont joined her brother, and hearing of her guest's intention, also joined in her brother's kind wishes. As Severine was not present when this conversation was taking place, she was still ignorant of Giovanni's contemplated departure abroad. When she did return presently, Josephine, with an amused smile, saw her brother, who had been getting very absent-minded, surreptitiously steal off to his workshop again.

It was one of those dreamy afternoons when the subdued chorus of birds and lazy drumming of countless insect wings incites drowsiness. To Josephine d'Egmont, who was so much of an invalid, the day was sweetly restful. After her brother's departure, she sat rocking herself to and fro on the verandah, listening to the voices of the young people, which soon faded farther and farther away, until suddenly they died into silence.

Severine had been speaking to Giovanni of the hours she had given to her violin since his departure, and only became aware that her aunt slept when she

turned to ask her if she would like to accompany them to the drawing-room, as they were going to have music. Seeing how childlike and sweetly she slumbered, Severine would not awaken her. Before turning away she pressed her lips to the forehead that was so frequently lined with pain. And so Josephine d'Egmont slept, no presentiment disturbing her of events that were now to occur and which were to completely change all their lives.

As they entered the drawing-room, memories so precious and dangerous crowded back to Giovanni as to arouse his fears for the strength which he had so earnestly assured himself he now possessed. Realising that he dare not dally with temptation, he decided to tell her, as soon as the conversation would permit, of his intention to go abroad.

A mysterious restraint possessed them both as they found themselves alone in the room. In the hope of breaking it, Giovanni took up the violin, and turning to Severine, asked her what she would like him to play.

For once she had no preference, and said simply, "What Monsieur pleases." There was the least possible vibration in her voice as she replied, but slight as it was, Giovanni noted it, and his heart again beat tumultuously.

He was standing quite near to where she was sitting, and as he looked down at the comely bent head, a gleam of sunlight shot through the masses of gorgeous brown hair, beautifying and endearing it so to him, that the keenest longing came over him to have the right to stoop and press his lips to it. With all his great love striving for the mastery (and believing that they would soon be separated for ever), he madly resolved to relieve the burden of his feelings in music, and began to

play the fateful love serenade which had affected her so when he had interpreted it to her a week ago, and which had whispered to her soul of the possibilities of a world of feeling undreamed of by her before. It never crossed his mind, as he impulsively chose the piece, that there might be any peril in it for her, nor did he stop to question whether the pleading melody, instead of but giving ease to his suppressed feelings, might result in the gravest danger to his plans for the future. When he had played the composition before, he had thrown his soul into the task, but not as he did now. As he lost himself still more deeply in his art, the strings began to tell of undying love so passionately that, had his listener been obtuse of imagination, instead of possessing the most delicate perceptions, she must surely have understood.

He had but made the strings whisper of love when first he had played to her the piece; now, he made them verily shout aloud their story. As they did so, they carried before them, as chaff before the wind, her every struggle for self-command. And so she sat as entranced as Ulysses when he listened to the irresistible melody of the sirens. Long before the piece was played through, Severine's transformed face was mirroring all the deep gladness of her willing captive heart. Just as he was drawing to a close she involuntarily raised her eyes, with all their magic light in them, and looked at the player. At the moment she did so, he looked down, and their eyes met. The sweet tenderness of her face did not alter, for she did not realise it was telling aught that she fain would have hidden.

But had her face, instead of expressing all that

was sweet and beautiful in her heart, borne the expression of the fabled goddess whose look turned the beholder into stone, the player could not have faltered more visibly; but it was the faltering of unutterable gladness, not of fear. The violin slipped from his hands: for a moment he hesitated, as though he could not understand; then, suddenly kneeling, he touched his lips to the small clasped hands, and murmured in a tone which thrilled her as even the music had not had the power to do, "Dearest!"

She did not speak, but sat happy—happy beyond expression.

She was silent so long, that a chill crept to his heart, and, releasing her hands, he rose and looked at her anxiously. But seeing in the slightly down-cast face no reproof for him—and hope making him bold again—he said softly, "I love you—Severine. Have you no word for me?"

Rising, in the grave, unaffected manner so characteristic of her, she simply stretched out her warm loving hands and laid them in his—a freewill offering she was never to regret, despite all the lowering future was already beginning to store up for her.

He stooped silently and kissed the precious offerings.

Conversation deserted them, and now, with his arm around her, they stood side by side, looking through the great open bay window, near by, at the blue majestic St. Lawrence, which, in the sunlight and deep quiet of the afternoon, flowed placidly by.

Giovanni was the first to break the silence. Slowly raising his hand and pointing at the river, he said, with a world of content, "How very peacefully

it flows! May our lives flow together as unruffled through the years that are to come!"

"The Holy Mother will, I am sure, answer your prayer," she said softly. Of the undying unrest of the great Atlantic, which the placid waters were so shortly to join, neither gave, as became their youth, a moment's thought.

Even as they spoke, a truant cloud, no larger than a man's hand, strayed across the face of the sun, for a space bereaving the water of its gladness, and tinging it with a soft melancholy.

Instantaneously, with the sudden change, there came to Giovanni, for the first time, the memory of Father Lacoste; of the direful story he had told him of that fierce night he had been called out to administer the last rites to the friendless, dying Italian; of the boy he had saved from freezing on the steps of the church of Notre Dame; of his adoption of the boy; and of the tarnished kinship the boy bore to the dying man. Rushing in on these memories came, too, the sickening knowledge that, in the abandon brought on by the music, these gruesome secrets must not be hid from her whose affections were now his. But even greater than his loathing to tell her of these things was the overpowering dread that when she knew all, the rift that should separate them would surely come.

Adding to his agony, conscience stung him with the memory of his conduct towards Father Lacoste.

It was not his continued silence that impressed her with the feeling that some distress had suddenly come to him, but the swift chilling of the hand in which hers so confidently rested. Shyly she raised her head and looked at him; but the light and gladness died from her eyes as they fell upon his face—it was strangely drawn and set.

With an anxious exclamation, she laid her hand on his arm, and, forgetful that she had never called him by his Christian name before, said, "What is it, Giovanni? Something is troubling you."

The sound of his name on her lips, and her dear anxiety, soothed him, and smiling down upon her, as though he thought she had given way to needless alarm, he tried to answer her lightly.

But her woman's heart was not deceived by his effort to disarm her fears, and as she looked into his eyes she pierced the superficial content he would have her read in them, and saw the trouble lurking there.

"Perhaps," she answered gravely, "it is something that does not concern me, and if it is you must pardon me; I—I thought you were deeply troubled, and I wanted to"—

"Would to the Virgin," he broke out, with impetuous distress, "that I could say it had no concern for you!" Again the chasm between their births and stations in life yawned threateningly before him, and he turned away sick at heart.

The keenness of his disquietude again appealed to all that was sympathetic and tender in her, and with that quiet gravity of manner that gave such grace to her years, she said gently, "I am glad, so glad, it concerns me; for now, whatever your trouble, I can help you to bear it."

As she stood there, with a wistful look of concern and sympathy betraying itself, despite her quiet self-control of manner, she had never appeared so dear to him, and he craved to take her to his heart; but he would not now deepen the wrong he feared he already had done her.

Drawing a chair for her, he said, "I fear the burden I have recently been called upon to bear is

one that even you, when you have heard all, will judge that none should share." He was sitting opposite her now, and trying to speak calmly, but she could easily see how difficult was the task.

With trust and confidence still showing in her face, she leaned slightly towards him, her manner speaking belief that he could have nothing to tell that would have the power to separate them.

He began by recalling the first night he had seen her in old Notre Dame Church, and how the memory of her face had been with him all through the ensuing winter in Paris; of his return to Montreal two months ago for a brief period of rest, but with the determination to try and find out who she was; of his continued stay in Montreal to find her, in spite of the prayers of Father Lacoste—one to whom he owed a debt of gratitude he could never repay; of his visit, at the request of the priest, to the shrine at Bonne Ste. Anne, to ask relief from the memory that was ever with him; of his meeting with her in the church; of his deepening love for her during the week he had been her father's guest; of his want of frankness with Father Lacoste, in allowing him to believe that it was because of spiritual good he desired to remain behind; of his return to Montreal, to try and win the priest's consent to openly press his suit; and, finally, of Father Lacoste's intense astonishment and dismay at learning that the lady he loved was the daughter of Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont.

He paused, his brow marred with mental anguish at what must now follow. She had been looking at him with the love-light deepening in her face, and he felt that he could not tell her of the stain upon his birth and see her expression change to one of wounded loathing. He rose in his pain and stepped to the

window, to screen his face from her and to nerve himself for the unfolding of the climax.

"And is this all, Monsieur?" She had followed him, and was standing by his side, her face bewitching to look upon. She only thought he was unduly sensitive and felt too keenly his deception to the good priest—her woman's heart made the greatness of his love for her hide all other faults.

He did not turn as she expected, and in answer to her question he said, with painful distinctness, "No, it is not all; you have simply heard the preface. Honour demands that I should reveal to you a thing Father Lacoste, in order to screen me from pain, kept a secret from me until only two days ago; it is that—that, Mademoiselle, I am not a gentleman born, that I am but the son of a street musician, and—and—that" (his hands clenched and perspiration broke out on his forehead)—"and that, Mademoiselle, my parents sought not the sanction of the Church to their union!"

He turned, with an air of desperation, and faced his listener. When he saw her face, he started back—on it was written palpable alarm and terror.

Her fear nerved him; the worst had been told. He felt he had lost everything, and sorely degraded himself in her sight.

With bowed head, he went on slowly: "There is only a little more to be told. After I knew all from Father Lacoste, I thought I had strength to look upon your face, just once more, before I went out of your life for ever; but my strength was overrated—as Father Lacoste feared. The wish to see you, however, was so strong that he finally gave way to my wishes. He took some hope from the fact he had imparted of how hopeless it would be for me ever to expect your father's consent to my

paying addresses to you. It was the knowledge he had of your father's great pride of family that compelled him to reveal to me what he did—he desired to save me from inevitable disappointment and humiliation. When I gave him my promise to speak no word of love to you on this final brief visit, I really believed it would be impossible for any temptation to make me break it.

"But besides having wronged Father Lacoste to-night, I have also deeply wronged Monsieur d'Egmont. Mademoiselle's distress also shows me how greatly I have pained and hurt her; I shall never cease to regret my indiscretion, and to lament that the thralldom of music made love give no thought to reason."

He turned now to withdraw, and said heavily, "I can only hope the years will make it easier for me to bear the burden—the burden, Mademoiselle, of your loss. When I am far away, perhaps it will be easier for you to forgive: I can understand how difficult it must be to do so now." He bent low his head and turned quickly to the door.

"Giovanni, Giovanni!—I have nothing to forgive. You do not understand." She was standing, her hands stretched out towards him.

He turned and looked at her as though he did not comprehend.

"It pains me that I should not have had more control" she began, her face pale and troubled, "and that my manner should have made you suppose I lacked the very qualities which you had the right to expect I possessed when you honoured me with your love. Monsieur—Giovanni—how could you think it would make any alteration in me?"

He waited to hear no more: to the winds were

given despair and wounded pride; in this supreme moment he cared not what the world might say or think; he knew she loved him, loved him for his own personality, and held him in regard above all birth. As he clasped her to his heart she rested her face trustingly on his shoulder, finding comfort and peace there.

In his relief and content, he gave no further thought to the peculiar alarm and fear she had shown when he had unfolded the story of his birth, and he would have made no mention of it to her had she not broached it. Seating herself, she drew him down to her feet, that she might look into his face as she spoke, and that he might also see into hers.

"Giovanni," she began, a shade of anxiety crossing her face again, "I must tell you what it was that caused my agitation; it is necessary that I should; I fear it is grave for you—for us both."

His manner exhibited no anxiety, and his only reply was to still more tightly fold her hands in his.

"I was so happy," she went on, her seriousness deepening, "when I heard of your love for me, that I could not believe anything you might reveal could mar it; but when the words about your birth fell from your lips I was, for a time, powerless with apprehension and dread: confronting me, came my father's great pride of family; the recollection of his unbending sternness to his younger sister, whom he disowned and never forgave for marrying one whose birth he thought did not equal hers. There came also many other recollections of acts of sternness my father had shown on this subject. I cannot ever remember him severe on any other. The fear, Giovanni, which overpowered me, and which you so naturally misunderstood, was caused only by the

dread that when my father knew of what had passed between us, the indomitable pride in his character would make him hesitate at nothing to separate me from you."

His delight at her explanation was such that it was impossible for him to share the keenness of her dread of possible unhappiness in store for them, and he was soon speaking eloquently and hopefully of the future.

What loving, girlish heart could ever long indulge in fears of future sorrows when a lover, magnetic with youth and hope, uses the most sombre forebodings as a background to bring out the more vividly the pictures of hope which he paints? And so, when Giovanni ceased by expressing a conviction that Monsieur d'Egmont, with the increased kindness which advancing years must have brought, would think more unselfishly of his daughter's happiness than years ago he had done of his sister's, Severine was willing to admit that the fear of their being separated must have magnified in her eyes the difficulties they would possibly ever be called upon to face.

Happiness such as theirs was beyond the compass of a room to contain, and so they left the house for the garden, where the breath of flowers, the singing of birds, and the calm dome above them, accorded perfectly with their feelings.

Seating themselves near a vine-clad summer-house, they began to talk of the strangeness of their first meeting. She recalled her impressions of the past Christmas Eve in Notre Dame Church. She told him of the sympathy she had felt for him when he had risen, violin in hand, away up in the vast organ-loft, and faced the sea of upturned expectant faces; of her complete subjugation to the mastery

of his playing, and of how unconscious she had been of partly rising when he had reached the great climax of the crucifixion. The influence of his music had never left her.

As yet he was ignorant of when the awakening of love had come to her, and he asked, "And did love come to you, Severine, that night, as it did to me?"

"Not that night, Giovanni."

"When I suddenly came face to face with you at the foot of the statue of Bonne Ste. Anne?"

"Not even then," she answered gravely. If she faltered to tell him, it was because of an impression that about the awakening of her love for him there had been something bordering upon the supernatural. Her face was almost solemn in its gravity when, after a long quiet, she raised her eyes to the ones seeking hers and said, "No human voice taught me what love was, Giovanni; my heart was awakened to its thralldom by the mystical voice which a new Orpheus created by his God-given genius on the violin—how strange, strange a wooing!" But throwing off her solemn mood, she continued: "Love for you awoke in my heart, Giovanni, when you inspired the love serenade, and played it to me the afternoon before you returned to Montreal. When you played it once more to-day, every note told of the glory of loving, and of being loved, more eloquently, Giovanni, than perhaps even your dear voice could have done. And now the surrender of my heart to you is complete, my whole life is changed, and no happiness will be so complete as to weave around my Orpheus every thought."

Raising her radiant face, he looked down into it, and said, with deep impressiveness, "And, Severine, if aught should ever separate us, I, like the faithful

Orpheus to whom you have loved me, would seek and possess you again even had I, as he for love's sake, entered the realms of the lost."

As he ceased speaking, their lips, for the first time, met in all the unselfishness of a first deep, pure affection.

Had they been less wrapt in conversation, they might have noticed, as they talked, that the dense low bushes at the far end of the garden were frequently agitated. As their lips had met they had shaken with great violence, and then a dull breaking of branches, followed a moment later by a dog's piercing howl, fell upon their ears and startled them.

Rising and looking in the direction from where he thought the noise had come, Giovanni saw the great hound Pataud — Friar Fontaine's mastiff — dash from the bushes towards them. The dog bounded to where Severine was sitting, and, crouching at her feet, began to lick its shoulder and to whine, as though in pain. When Giovanni tried to approach, it growled savagely. Kneeling, Severine drew the head of the beast to her lap and began to stroke it. The animal, with dumb affection, licked her hands, and then, with a whine, turned and licked its shoulder again. Carefully parting the coarse hair, Severine saw, on the shoulder, a discoloration that looked like a bruise. As there was no one in sight, she thought something must have hurt the animal by falling upon it.

After the brute had grown quiet, the peculiar incident slipped from the lovers' minds, and again seating themselves, they began to talk of the future, and of getting the consent of Father Lacoste and Monsieur d'Egmont to an engagement between them. Giovanni was sure that the priest would

not object to their engagement, seeing he was willing to go abroad at once and complete his studies—when he returned, they could be married.

"As for Monsieur d'Egmont," said Giovanni, rising, "it is only right that he should know at once what has passed between us: I will go now and ask his consent." Despite his lightheartedness, his heart sank at the thought of the ordeal before him.

Severine, brought face to face again with her great fear, could scarcely hide her agitation as they approached the house. The dog was following them, irresolutely stopping, from time to time, to look longingly in the direction of the bushes from which it had sprung.

They reached the steps of the house just as Josephine d'Egmont was descending them. "I was just coming to seek you in the garden," said the elder lady, "to tell you that your father has just driven to catch the Quebec train. He will not return from Quebec till to-morrow. He received a telegram, a little while ago, calling him there on important business."

Severine, for the first time in her life, knew what it was to feel relief at the absence of her father from home—the evil day, when he must know all, had been postponed. Fearing that her face might betray her relief, she turned to speak to the dog, but it had disappeared.

Had she gone a little to the right and looked down the main path, she would have caught sight of the animal crawling abjectly back towards the clump of bushes.

Reaching the outer edge of the bushes, the beast began to whine piteously. As it did so, a voice full of agony called out, "Pataud, Pataud, *vien, vien*,

mai pauvre chien." Hearing its name, the beast sprang to its feet with a glad bark, tore its way through the bushes, and reached the open space beyond, where, lying near the fence, with his face buried in the grass, was Friar Fortaine. Whimpering with gladness, the beast licked its stricken master's hands—which were clenched in the grass—and then crouched down beside him.

Lifting his face, which was distorted with grief, the friar looked at the dumb faithful creature, and said, as he laid his hand gently on its head, "*Pauvre Pataud, I did not mean to strike you.*" Then his eyes began to blaze, and he continued, with an outburst of terrible fury: "I thought, Pataud, that *he* had been delivered into my hands, and that he was lying on the ground before me. I had watched him through the bushes, and saw—and ah, I struck down! But it was not he, it was you that got the blow. See, see, Pataud, how easily I tear the bushes and throw them to the wind, and, Pataud, I would have rent him as easily." In his madness he raised high his hand again to savagely smite the earth; but the arm remained uplifted: lying on the grass, where the blow must have fallen, was a photograph—a photograph of a lovely girlish face, a picture he had been looking at before he became aware of others being in the garden.

Seeing the face in the picture, his insane rage vanished in an instant. Tenderly picking up the photograph, he looked at it with quivering lips, and then suddenly burying his face in the grass, burst into hoarse, heartrending sobs. Poor Jean Fontaine! poor mad, deformed friar!

CHAPTER XI

THE ORDEAL

"Consider man, weigh well thy frame,
The king, the beggar are the same;
Dust formed us all. Each breathes his day,
Then sinks into his native clay."

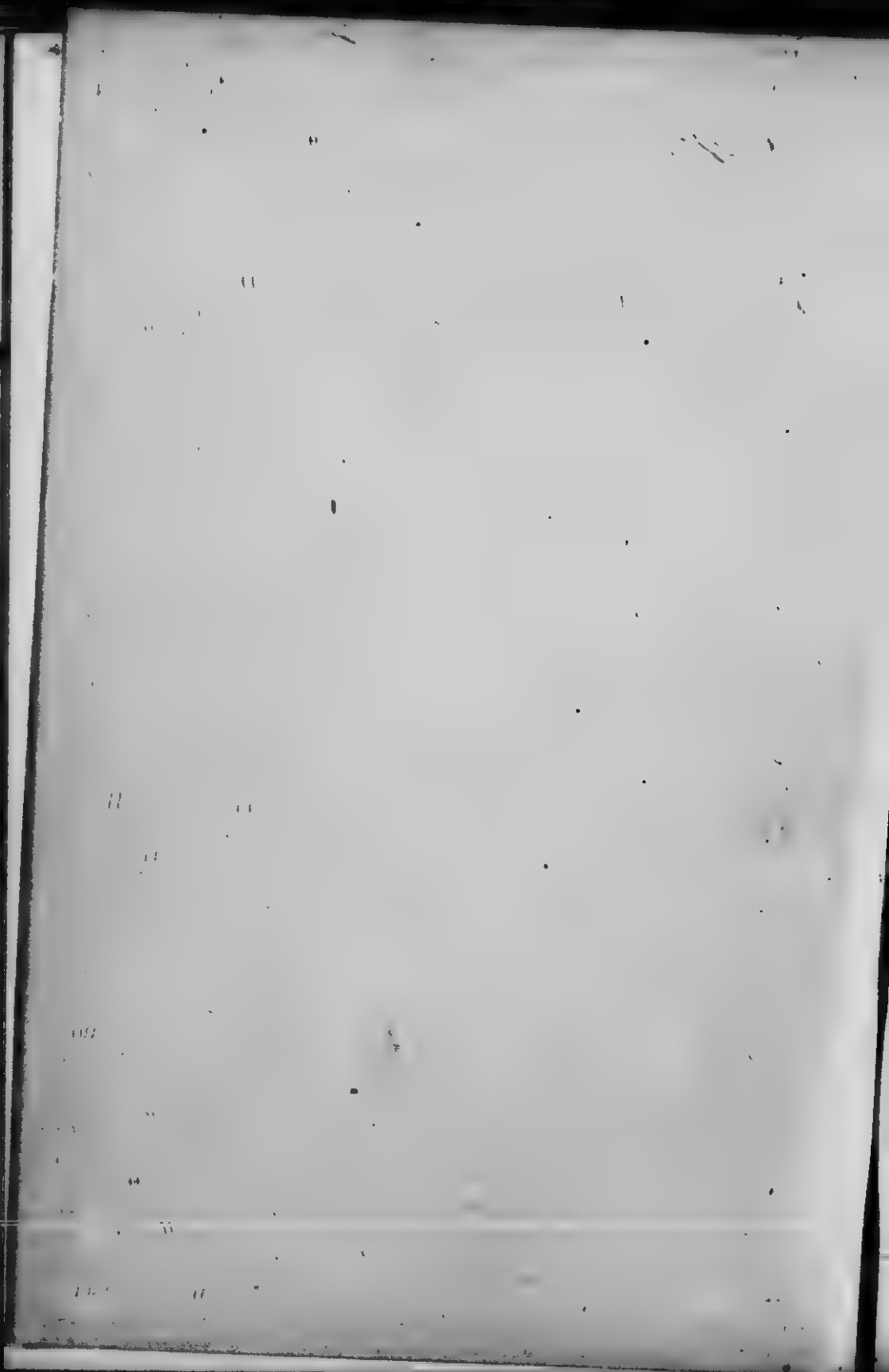
IT was almost four o'clock of the following day before Monsieur d'Egmont arrived at Ste. Anne and found the two ladies and Giovanni waiting for him at the station. Monsieur was extremely pleased to be home again, and ruefully shaking his head, regretted that there should be anything like business to distract and call one from home.

Severine, who had been very restless during the wait for the train, laughed affectionately at her father's words, and boldly hazarded the belief that his longing to be back and stuffing some gruesome denizen of the air or water had been the cause of infinitely more distraction to him than any business he had been called upon to transact.

A covert smile played under Monsieur's grey moustache at this home thrust, and, like the good general that he was, he avoided a controversy on so dangerous a subject by adroitly turning the conversation to another channel. The wisdom of such not uncommon tactics was once more demonstrated when it was found that within twenty minutes after Monsieur's return to the house he had once more buried himself in his workshop.



THE OLD CHAPEL OF MIRACLES OF 1686



And while Monsieur d'Egmont, all unconscious of the storm that was to break over his home, happily busied himself with his treasured collection, Giovanni and Severine were sitting thoughtfully in the drawing-room, one subject occupying both their minds—the acquainting of Monsieur with all that had happened between them.

If Giovanni kept his promise to Father Lacoste, he must leave in a very few hours for Montreal, and two days later sail for France.

If love had been slower in coming to Severine than to Giovanni, it had made amends by the depth and witchery with which it now enthralled her. Since the time when love first began to creep into her heart, and since the incident of the never-to-be-forgotten yesterday—which had irretrievably turned over the last page of girl-life and ushered in womanhood with all its greater capacities for joy or sorrow—it seemed, as she thought of her great love, that months, instead of a few fleeting days, must have elapsed since the great change in her life had come. The thought of now being parted from him who had wrought this wondrous change caused a sorrow so poignant as to be to her almost unbearable.

The sad silence which had fallen between them was broken by Giovanni rising quietly but firmly, and saying, with a smile, to make her hopeful and brave, "And now, dearest, I will go and see him; and when I return I shall bring tidings that the cloud which we have conjured up need never have caused us care."

Now that the crucial moment had come, she would not say a word that might diminish his fortitude. But raising her face, which shone with a sudden confidence, she said brightly, "Yes, Giovanni, we

should never have conjured up the cloud. As you see, I have already banished it and"—

"And," he interrupted, taking the dear winsome face between his hands and looking lovingly down into it,—“and all I see left of the cloud is its silver lining.”

They walked together to the door, and as he was about to go he turned to her and said smilingly, “Like Ulysses, Severine, I am sure of the success of my mission, because I have the good wishes of a goddess.”

She drew a small crucifix, which she always carried, and kissing it devoutly, she answered, “All the time you are away, Giovanni, I shall pray Bonne Ste. Anne for your success, and that will assure it infinitely more than were I really a goddess, and instead of Minerva’s power had even that of Jove’s.”

His lips touched hers, and then she was alone.

It was well for Giovanni that some after-thought did not make him return to the drawing-room; for had he done so, he would have found Severine kneeling by the side of a chair, her face no longer bright and hopeful, but pale and drawn, the crucifix pressed in distress to her bosom, and her eyes dilated with apprehension.

Giovanni gave no evidence of hesitation as he strode rapidly in the direction of Monsieur d’Egmont’s workshop, but his hand nevertheless might have been seen to tremble ever so slightly as he knocked at the door. Monsieur d’Egmont answered the summons personally, and warmly welcomed his visitor. Upon entering, Giovanni saw Friar Fontaine standing in his accustomed corner at the end of the work-bench, his sombre face bent over a piece of skin which he was scraping with a long flexible knife.

Monsieur d'Egmont, flattered with the supposed interest that was awakening in Giovanni towards the not over patronised art of taxidermy, and anxious to foster any latent regard he might possibly have for it, promptly piloted him over to the delicate specimen he had been operating upon, and with much gusto was soon lovingly explaining how such specimens might be preserved; after which, to his pupil's inward distress, he began to enlarge on theories of grave import connected with the art in general. "Is it not a beautiful specimen?" he asked proudly, as with head balanced critically on one side he held aloft, for Giovanni's admiring gaze, the object of his attention—a lovely purple gallinule.

Despite the anxiety under which Giovanni was labouring, he could not help but admire the gorgeous purple plumage of the bird, made more striking and attractive by the deep yellow of its beak and legs.

The unwary look of admiration on Giovanni's face sealed whatever doubt Monsieur might have had as to his visitor's dawning infatuation for the art, and so, promptly laying the bird down, he proceeded to sketch in broad lines valuable lessons in the art of dissecting and stuffing.

"Birds," he began volubly (fortunately not looking up at Giovanni's now anything but glowing countenance), "are, as Monsieur will see, treated in a way peculiar to themselves." Bending over the gallinule, and pointing out the different parts of its anatomy as he went on, he continued: "Birds, Monsieur, are never cut upon the breast, but are operated upon from under the wing. From the incision under the wings we have to remove all the flesh, but this work is comparatively easy, and the

real difficulty is faced when we come to operate upon the neck and head—for the integument must not be unduly stretched, or the eyelids or beak injured. By great care, however, the flesh can be removed from these parts, and the eyelids left intact as in life."

He chanced to look unexpectedly up, and the uneasy lover came perilously near betraying his restiveness, but, controlling his countenance just in time, he murmured, "Ah, what a very difficult task! how very interesting, how very interesting!" Yet, withal, there was stealing over Giovanni a feeling both of comfort and confidence, caused by the firm impression that the kindly gentleman, speaking with almost childish enthusiasm, could not possibly be imbued with the implacable disposition spoken of by Father Lacoste and referred to with such dread by Severine. The comfort which this belief brought made him less impatient, and he waited more calmly for a suitable opportunity of introducing the subject so momentous to him.

Waxing still more warm over his subject, Monsieur d'Egmont branched off into the totally different mode of operating upon mammals, reptiles, and fish, copiously quoting Latin terms and names as he gave himself up to his subject. Long before the end of this introductory lecture was reached, Giovanni was recalling all that a loved voice had told him of love being to her so much greater than birth and wealth, and picturing to himself the confident, loving face awaiting him in the drawing-room.

It was while Monsieur d'Egmont was enumerating the almost numberless things needed for stuffing, such as tow, wadding, arsenic, camphor, burnt alum, saltpetre, sulphate of soda, etc. etc., and was preparing to explain and extol the modern school of

modelling, in preference to stuffing, on account of the lifelike faithfulness with which modelling preserved every contour of the subject, that Giovanni awoke to the consciousness that time was quickly flying, and how it behoved him to make some attempt to inform Monsieur of the fact that his infatuation for this alluring art was not alone responsible for his visit. The difficulty of acquainting his host with what was uppermost in his thoughts was greatly magnified by the presence of Friar Fontaine—who might have been another specimen of Monsieur's preserving skill for all the attention he seemed to be paying to what was transpiring.

Try as he might to hit upon some diplomatic way of changing the conversation, he failed to do so, and was almost resigning himself to despair, when some subtle intuition made Monsieur d'Egmont realise that he was extending his first lesson to an unconscionable length, and so, with a little self-reproving laugh, he turned to his pupil and said, "But there, Monsieur, I am afraid I have talked far too long and that I have been very tiresome."

Giovanni politely replied that he had been very much entertained and instructed indeed; whereupon, lo, Monsieur displayed the most alarming symptoms of again taking up the thread of his discourse, and doubtlessly would have done so had not Giovanni hurriedly said, "But, Monsieur d'Egmont, I had almost forgotten that I had come to speak to you of a matter of the gravest personal importance to myself."

In a moment Monsieur d'Egmont's grave courtesy of manner showed itself, and again begging pardon for his want of consideration, placed his services in the most kindly manner at the disposal of his visitor.

But the presence of Friar Fontaine disquieted Giovanni and made him visibly hesitate.

Noting Giovanni's disquietude, Monsieur d'Egmont seated himself, and in order to make his guest feel thoroughly at ease, drew up a chair for him, and said in a fatherly tone, "Be seated, Monsieur."

Giovanni took the chair and began with difficulty: "What I have to say, Monsieur, is of a personal nature—and—and"—He stopped and looked abruptly at the friar, whose back was turned to them.

Instantly Monsieur d'Egmont comprehended, and slightly inclining his head towards the dark figure, said, "Oh, certainly, if Monsieur wishes, we can be alone; but"—The meaning pause and the slight uplifting of Monsieur's brows clearly conveyed his appreciation of his dependent's meagre intelligence, and how little his presence in the room could matter.

Giovanni felt it would be discourteous to press the matter any further; he could not shake off the impression, though, that the intelligence of this strange towering creature was stronger than his host thought.

"It will cause no unpleasant surprise, I trust," began Giovanni, with an effort at composure, "for Monsieur to know that I have come to speak to him of a member of his family."

"Ah!" There was no surprise in Monsieur's voice, it was rather slightly absent; for the purple gallinule was close at hand and was hard to forget.

Reassured, Giovanni went on: "It is of Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont I desire to speak."

Monsieur d'Egmont looked up quickly, keen interest now showing in his face.

It had been Giovanni's intention to lead up

gradually to his subject; but an impulsive rush of earnestness, so characteristic of his nature, made him forget everything but his great love, and he said, with the love-light beaming in his eyes, "Monsieur, I love Mademoiselle d'Egmont. I"—

The rest of his words were lost in a shrill vibrating twang which rang through the room. The men turned: there, standing with his face turned towards them, stood Friar Fontaine, in his hand the handle only of the knife he had been working with—the thin broken blade was quivering musically in the table, and impaling the skin it had been scraping.

Rising, Monsieur d'Egmont said, "How strangely careless you are getting to be, Jean! That is the second skin you have spoiled to-day. But you may retire now. I wish to be alone with Monsieur Correggio."

Attempting no apology or excuse, Friar Fontaine, with bent head, strode from the room.

When he had gone, Monsieur d'Egmont turned to Giovanni and said, "I can scarcely believe Monsieur can be in earnest. Mademoiselle has just returned from the convent, and is little more than a child in years; and Monsieur is barely acquainted with her."

"She is eighteen, Monsieur," returned Giovanni earnestly, "and although my acquaintance with her has not been long, I have learned to love her very dearly. We are quite willing to wait as long as Monsieur may desire."

"We—we, Monsieur Correggio? It cannot be possible that you have acquainted Mademoiselle d'Egmont with the state of your feelings?" There was peculiar severity in the speaker's voice.

"I have to regret," answered Giovanni, "having revealed my affection to Mademoiselle Severine

before first receiving permission from her father. But I give Monsieur my word of honour that when I came to pay him this final visit it was with the firm resolve Mademoiselle should never guess at the state of my feelings, and that my love for her should for ever be locked up in my heart. Grave reasons had been revealed to me, Monsieur, why this should be. It is difficult, but I will try and explain how my resolution came to fail and it chanced that I told her of my love."

Monsieur d'Egmont had been standing, but now hastily resuming his seat, he said quickly, "Monsieur will have my keenest attention to what he has to explain."

The coldness in manner of his host could not but affect Giovanni; yet love kept hope alive, and before he had been talking many minutes the constraint of his manner fled, and when concluding and speaking of his love his voice rang with enthusiasm.

He recounted to Monsieur (as he had done the afternoon previous to the lady of his troth) how the sight of Mademoiselle d'Egmont's face in old Notre Dame Church would not be put from memory, and of his joy at their unexpected meeting in the Church of Bonne Ste. Anne. He spoke of the promise, too, he had made to Father Lacoste, that the present visit should be the last time he would ever look upon Mademoiselle's face. And then he began to describe the scene between them in the drawing-room, the day previous, when the fascination of music made him forget for a time everything but the pain of his great love for her—and he had revealed it.

As Monsieur listened, and as he heard the young lover speak of his love for his art, of his hope and belief that the world would do him honour in the future, and of his willingness to wait years, if

necessary, for the lady, peerless above all others to him, Monsieur's countenance relaxed and took on something of its usual absent, kindly expression.

Giovanni now paused for a moment to gird himself for the unfolding of the dire details of his birth and parentage.

Brief as the pause was, the expression of Monsieur d'Egmont's face changed again, and something like a look of furtive alarm came over it, and he said slowly, "But Monsieur has said nothing concerning his family. I do not remember Père Lacoste saying anything more about Monsieur than that he had adopted him and that he believed he had unusual gifts."

The peculiar monotony in the voice of the speaker chilled Giovanni: he had found it hard to proceed before, but it was far more so now. The presentiment of approaching disaster was so strong upon him that he remained silent.

Although surprised at the continued silence of his guest, Monsieur d'Egmont gave no outward sign that he noticed it, and sat patiently waiting for him to continue.

"My silence, Monsieur," began Giovanni, with an abruptness which sounded very strange to his listener, "to be frank, has been due to my endeavours to gain composure so as to unfold certain details about my parentage and history that have given me the deepest pain—details, however, which I hope will in no wise alter whatever estimate Monsieur may previously have formed of my character."

Monsieur d'Egmont looked suddenly up at Giovanni, his eyebrows meeting.

"I would, Monsieur," went on Giovanni, meeting the piercing look of his host, "that for the sake of Mademoiselle Severine the bluest blood in the universe flowed in my veins, but it does not."

The speaker paused, in the hope that some word would make it less trying to proceed; but none came.

"My birth," continued Giovanni in a voice in which there was a peculiar mixture of desperation and doggedness, "is lowly; I—I—am the son of—of"—

"Monsieur is the son of?" inquired the listener, filling in the pause in a harsh, monotonous voice.

"The son, Monsieur d'Egmont—the son of an Italian street musician,"—oh to have been able to have added, "yet of honourable parentage"!—

Monsieur d'Egmont turned quickly to the table at his side to hide the flush which mounted to his brow. Sorely feeling the need of composure, he stood smoothing down a ruffled feather of the purple gallinule.

Not seeing the flush, and grasping at the hope that after all he might be misconstruing his host's sentiments, Giovanni hastened to tell the unhappy sequel to his story—a sequel which he knew there could be no hiding.

"My birth, as Monsieur now knows," he hurriedly went on in stumbling sentences, "is lowly. I have also to say that my parents, Monsieur, are said not to have looked to the Church to countenance their—their—Monsieur—their union, and"—

"Monsieur Correggio!"

The remainder of the sentence never fell from Giovanni's lips; Monsieur d'Egmont had sprung round, and was confronting him with a passion too great for words.

"The house of the d'Egmonts," he huskily began at last, "has indeed fallen, Monsieur, when the illegitimate son of a street musician can claim to have won the love of the last of our race, a race of

patricians, and does her father the honour to sue for her hand!" Withering sarcasm shook the speaker's voice.

Giovanni stepped back as though he had been struck, every nerve quivering with humiliation.

"I thought," continued Monsieur, with less passion, but in clear, cutting tones, "that the adopted son of a friend of mine could not but be a gentleman born, and so I gladly welcomed you as my guest, Monsieur. My courtesy has been ill requited. Knowing the facts of your birth and antecedents, in common courtesy you should have acquainted me with them before paying your addresses to Mademoiselle d'Egmont—but Monsieur's code of honour, naturally, never deemed such a course necessary."

The hot blood of his race surged in Giovanni's veins and carried away all control. Taking a step forward, he said in bitter anger, "Monsieur's judgment is as unjust as it is harsh and uncalled-for. Father Lacoste will be my witness that it was only upon my return to Montreal, after my first visit here, that he made known to me the truth concerning my birth and parentage. Prior to that time I was under the impression that I was the son of a dear friend of his. The wrong I have done, Monsieur" (his anger now died away), "was in my thinking that before going out of Mademoiselle d'Egmont's life—and bearing alone through the long years of the future the agony of having lost her—I had strength enough to see her yet once again."

In the speaker's voice there was truth, and Monsieur d'Egmont knew it, and he answered, with less anger, but with no abatement of inflexibility, "What Monsieur has said explains much, and I am glad to know he was not in possession

of these facts when he first became my guest and began his attentions to my daughter. If I have said anything that has sounded harsh, Monsieur, I apologise. Like Monsieur, I have to regret this final visit. While it may be possible to understand the sudden weakness of Monsieur's purpose during this visit, it is not easy to account for the application Monsieur makes for her hand to-day. How could you, Monsieur, expect anything but refusal of such request? Even were Mademoiselle as lowly born as Monsieur, she is of stainless birth."

Straightening out his figure, he continued, with a world of dignity and pride: "The lady whose hand Monsieur sues for is a descendant of one of the noblest families of France, and when she marries it must be with one whose birth is fully as noble as her own. It is argued, it is true, that birth is an accident, as is the inheritance of wealth, or a thousand other things in the world; but, Monsieur, in my sight birth is more precious than aught in the universe. It is possible to acquire wealth; and art, deeply as I revere it, may also be gained; but the gentleness of blood and the traditions and honour of noble birth are gifts of God. Monsieur knows how deeply I prize them." The sternness of his face grew more marked, and he continued, with slow incisiveness: "Mademoiselle d'Egmont is scarcely out of her teens, and from what Monsieur has told me of her childish sentiments, her education is certainly yet incomplete, and it becomes my duty to arrange with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at Quebec for her immediate return there."

As Giovanni listened, with hope all dead, he was wondering, in a dull sort of way, if the speaker before him, exhibiting in every gesture and word purpose so indomitable that it were madness to

try and shake, could really be the same kindly, absent character who so short a time before had been delighting in giving semblance of life to the inanimate things around him; a man of keen intelligence and loving disposition—"a man," thought Giovanni, "to whom none would have dreamed of attributing such unrelenting prejudice."

Monsieur d'Egmont's threat to remove Severine to the convent filled Giovanni's cup of hopelessness to the brim. From the new characteristics which had now been revealed in his host he did not for a moment doubt but that he would promptly carry his threat into execution, and already before the lover's eye arose the towering walls of the sombre convent entombing her whose life was dearer to him than his own.

Great as was Giovanni's sorrow, his outward manner gave but little evidence of it, and as Monsieur d'Egmont concluded, he answered quietly, with a touch of dignity, "I will not trespass farther by prolonging an interview which has brought such annoyance to Monsieur. I can but earnestly apologise for having spoken of love to Mademoiselle d'Egmont before having Monsieur's permission to do so, and to trust that the explanation I have made may excuse much. As for the love I bear Mademoiselle d'Egmont, it is such that, whatever my birth or station, it calls for no shame or apology." He took a step backward to the door, and continued: "My train, Monsieur, leaves in two hours. The hotel is near the station; I shall take it from there. My apologies once more, Monsieur." He bowed and turned quickly.

As he reached the door, Monsieur d'Egmont said calmly and with evident sincerity, "Until Monsieur's train leaves he will kindly remain my guest."

"I thank Monsieur," answered Giovanni, bowing once more, and then the door closed.

Slowly, very slowly, he retraced his steps along the passage with his crushing tidings for the loving heart awaiting him in the drawing-room, the thought of the convent one moment shaking him with dread, and the next arousing fierce resolves that she should never again be immured in it.

Entering the room, he saw her standing at the window, the crucifix still in her hands, anxiety mantling her face.

When she heard him, she turned quickly, and with breathless eagerness awaited his approach. Something seemed to tie her feet that she could not move to meet him.

He walked slowly to her, trying hard to control his countenance.

She could not clearly catch his expression till he came into the light of the window, but when he was within its range love made his face to her as an open book, and she knew all.

He stood by her side, making no attempt to draw her to him. But taking his arms, she drew them gently around her, and in their dear shelter looked up at him. The love and soothing in her eyes sorely tried him. "My God," he thought, "how am I to give her up?"

She gave no evidence of impatience, and waited quietly for him to speak.

Briefly as he could, he began to tell her of all that had passed between her father and himself. She listened without comment until he began bitterly to tell her of her father's intention of separating their lives by sending her immediately to a convent. Then her quiet of manner gave way, and starting from him, she buried her face in

her hands and cried, "Oh, not now! I cannot, cannot go back now!"

Even as she spoke came the recollection of the peaceful years she had spent in the convent with the Sisters, and of how often she had longed that she might become a nun and live, as they did, alone for eternity. Conscience, which always held dictatorial sway over her, now condemned her for the words she had given expression to, charging her with having lost her devotion to the Church and the love for what was holy. Born worshipper as she was, these upbraidings sorely troubled her, and in her love and distraction she raised her eyes and prayed aloud, "Dear Virgin, guide me this day."

Giovanni wished to be strong, wished to do right; but the sight of her misery was madness to his love, and his whole being fought for her. She loved him! This was all he remembered now. He took her hands with passionate tenderness in his own, and, crushed with a sense of his own misery, he began to tell her, with all a lover's infectious earnestness, of the dreariness and misery life would be to him without her, and of his sure conviction that their lives would be for ever sundered if she were sent to the convent. Finally he made the desperate admission that he had not strength to part with her. Carried away by his fears of the future, and dominated by his love, he now boldly pleaded that they should take the guidance of their lives into their own hands.

Almost wrenching her hands from him, she said fearfully, "Giovanni, what would you urge me to do?"

He held his hands out to her with a desperation that was hard for her to resist. "Be my wife, Severine," he answered. "Come with me."

His meaning was only too plain. With heaving bosom and face full of pain, she said very slowly, "Giovanni, you do not know what you ask. Think of how our Church condemns union without the consent of parents; think of the unhappiness it would cause my father and my aunt; think of Père Lacoste, who has been a father to you. Let us try to be patient, dear" (her hands were clasped, and she was pleading now), "and help me to be brave and strong, Giovanni; it will not matter how long I may be separated from you, my heart will never change. The future may be less unkind than we fear; my father may yet consent, and the difficulties which now keep us apart may all be smoothed away. The thought of being parted from you, Giovanni—oh, help me to bear it bravely!"

True and noble as he knew her pleading to be, it was beyond him (as it is so often with the stronger sex) to rise to her height of self-denial, and while he did not urge her further, he turned aside with a face of such sore disappointment and sorrow as to make her pity for him almost beyond endurance.

Going to his side and falteringly laying her hand on his arm, she said brokenly, "Giovanni—Giovanni!" So great was her pity that in her voice there had come a shade of self-condemnation.

He looked into her face, and then said, with white lips, "Severine, I have tried, and cannot give you up."

He watched the rapid changes passing over her face as he waited for her reply.

"Then, Giovanni," the words were long in coming, "I cannot bid you go."

She saw the rapture which sprang into his eyes, and once more stretching out her hands pleadingly to him, said, "Now you know all that love really is

to me, do not, Giovanni, influence me against what conscience tells me is right. Help me to remember the claims of my father."

This time her abandon—and almost appeal to his honour—won him, despite all his love. His eyes sought the floor, and he stood fighting the hardest battle a man is ever called upon to fight—to give up the woman he loves.

She watched him struggle, but did not speak.

"You are stronger and nobler than I am, Severine," he said, when he raised his head, "and what you urge is right: we will wait; the future, as you say, may be less unkind than we think, and your father may relent. I know I should not be acting fairly did I not acquiesce in what you feel you owe your conscience, and your duty to your father and aunt. But, Severine, my heart presages only sorrow for us both in this sacrifice." He had not meant to give way to his fears and make her trial heavier, and so, trying to speak more brightly, he went on earnestly: "Do not, Severine, allow the least thing that I may have said to-day to make your sojourn in the convent, if you must enter it again for a time, harder to endure. Think of me, dear, as you remember me to-day, with every thought and every hope centred in you."

She bent her head that he might not see the misery in her face.

Taking up a fold of the soft burnished hair, Giovanni pressed it passionately to his lips. As he did so, the portieres were silently drawn aside, and Friar Fontaine was revealed. Quietly as the curtains had parted, something of their rustle reached Severine, and she raised her head and looked quickly towards them, but now they no longer framed the friar's figure.

They were seated when the curtains were once more drawn aside, and Friar Fontaine, walking heavily into the room, said, "Monsieur d'Egmont wishes to see Mademoiselle as soon as possible." He did not wait for a reply, but hurried from the room.

Severine rose as soon as he had gone, and said, "My father very rarely sends for me, Giovanni. It—may be that he has changed his mind about the convent."

Not daring to look at her lest his eyes should belie his words, Giovanni replied, "Yes, Severine, it may be as—as you hope."

She looked at him with tremulous lips and turned away.

During her absence he did not spend the time in agonised prayer, as she had done when waiting for him, but strode agitatedly to and fro, twice parting the curtains to look for her. Now she was gone, he was beginning to realise a little of what it would mean to lose her, and the temptation not to give her up again assailed him.

When she presently returned, he saw in her face that which made his resentment against her father greater than ever.

Slipping her hand in his, she said wistfully, "He—my father—knows no relenting, Giovanni."

"The convent is inevitable?" he asked in a hard, dry voice.

"It is my father's command that I shall return to the convent the day after to-morrow. I must remain there for two years."

"And after that, Severine, what have we to hope?"

"Giovanni!"

"Be merciful to me, Severine; tell me all he said; think of what it means to me."

From the emotion of her manner, he knew she was weaker of purpose than she had ever been before.

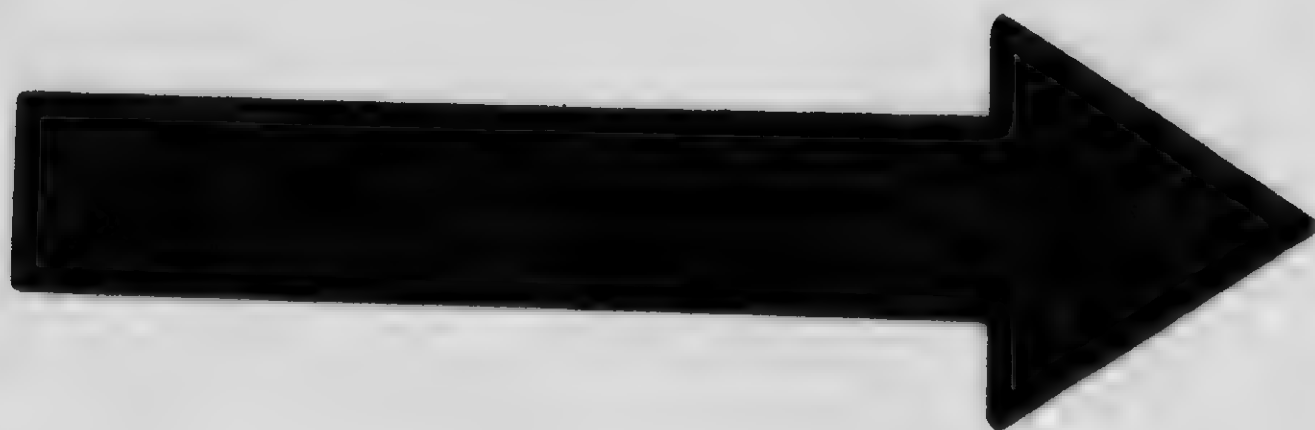
"He said," she began, with dry lips, "that he would never suffer me to be united to you; that he would sooner see me in death; that if after two years in the convent I did not solemnly promise never to see you again, he would have me removed to the Convent of the Precious Blood, where I should take the veil and become a nun, and never see the world again."

With clenched hands, Giovanni asked in a voice not above a whisper, "You think he would really do this, Severine?"

"To his youngest sister," she faltered, "he—he—Giovanni"—

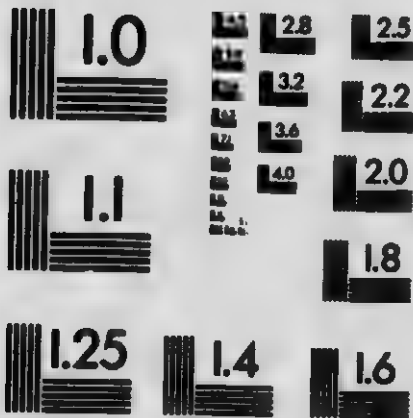
He did not wait to hear more; his love and fear had swallowed up every other consideration, and catching her to his heart, he cried, "Severine, such sacrifice is too great, and I will not give you up. Think, dearest, of the long vista of years, with only hopelessness to fill the measure of our lives; think of the preciousness of the love that has come to us and of what taking it from me now means, Severine; you would leave my life a blank; I were better dead. The hope that some day we might meet again has now been killed. The taking of the veil would be a living death to you. We owe to those who love us obedience, but not lifelong sacrifice and suffering. For the love you bear me, Severine, do not make my life hopeless by sacrificing me to a mistaken sense of what you owe to religion, and to Monsieur your father. Come with me. Be my wife!"

Her heart only too rapturously drank in the sweetness of his passionate pleading. Her face was pale, but happy, as she said, in solemn voice, "We shall not be parted, Giovanni, and may the dear



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Virgin grant that sorrow may never come to us for the decision we make this day."

"Amen," he whispered.

As they stood in their happiness, it came to him how very short their time was, and he said, "Our plans must be made now, dear; for it must be to-night."

"So soon?" she said, starting.

"We dare not delay longer," he went on hurriedly, "for I promised Father Lacoste to take the train this evening, and should I fail to arrive in Montreal to-morrow, in his anxiety he might telegraph Monsieur d'Egmont asking if I had left. Then, again, Monsieur d'Egmont has given you but another day to prepare for the convent, so you see it must be to-night."

She did not answer, and then, for several minutes, he spoke to her, quietly unfolding the plans for their flight, which his active mind so quickly conceived.

She stood without speaking so long after he had ceased that he began to fear that at this the eleventh hour she would fail him; but his fears were groundless.

"I understand all you have said, Giovanni, and will be there," was her simple, quiet rejoinder. The interlacing of her fingers was the only evidence of her agitation.

The bell rang for tea as she was speaking.

It was the last time he believed her father's house would ever shelter them, and, taking her hands, he whispered, "Be brave, dear; we shall be very happy."

When they met again, she was seated at the table in the dining-room.

Throughout the meal Monsieur d'Egmont was polite and courteous. Mademoiselle Josephine scarcely spoke. It was a trying ordeal to Giovanni.

Almost immediately after the repast was over, Giovanni was bidden a quiet adieu by Monsieur and the two ladies, and turned his face towards the station, to take the train (as Monsieur d'Egmont never thought of doubting) for Montreal. Yet when the train left Ste. Anne de Beaupré, twenty minutes later, Giovanni was not among its passengers.

After he had left the house, Severine, from her room, had looked after his figure till it disappeared in the distance, and then, not daring to trust herself to her thoughts, hastily summoned her maid, Katie Kimball, whom she must now take into her confidence, if she was to be faithful to her promise.

Katie's stay in her mistress's room was a very long one, and when she emerged from it her bright eyes fairly glowed with suppressed excitement. She sped straight to her own room, and when she left it there were little touches to her hair and attire which in no way diminished her attractiveness. She walked rapidly in the direction of the back of the house, as though bent upon some important mission.

CHAPTER XII

A WILY ANGLER

"Beshrew my heart, but it is wondering strange;
Sure there is something more than witchcraft in them,
That masters ev'n the wisest of us all."

NEXT to the attachment of our worthy friend Baptiste to vivacious Katie Kimball—an affection already referred to—there was nothing which had a greater attraction for him than Monsieur d'Egmont's pair of high-bred horses. Baptiste practically occupied the dual position of footman and coachman, and when not busied in the house in the former capacity, always navigated, as true as the needle to the pole, to the stables, where, divesting himself of his coat and vest, he would charge a venerable wooden pipe with *tabac Canadienne* (deservedly famed through the whole province for the lustiness of its odour), and then proceed to put a still higher gloss upon the shining coats of the unappreciative horses.

It was characteristic of Baptiste that the harder he brushed and polished the more energetically he pulled away at his pipe, until at times both horses and man looked like distorted shadows behind the aromatic cloud which so vigorously poured from the labouring pipe.

About an hour after Giovanni had bidden his final adieu to the d'Egmonts, and had left, as all but one member of the family thought, to take the train

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GREAT COLLECTION OF CRUTCHES LEFT BY THOSE
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immediately for Montreal, Baptiste might have been seen engaged in his favourite pastime in the stable. He had been at work so long that dusk had overtaken him, and now a lantern, dangling from the roof, cast a somewhat ghostly light through the thick rich air upon the beasts and workman.

Delighting in his occupation, and rejoicing in the knowledge that he was out of danger of being sent to Monsieur's hated room, where the grim skeleton presided over its motley subjects, Baptiste smoked, brushed, and wrought with right goodwill, breaking at intervals into snatches of song—long and faithful practice giving him the knack of holding the pipe between his teeth while so engaged.

The song he was edifying himself with was a ditty quite popular with the habitants, and ran—

"A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle,
Que je me suis baigne."

Despite the impeding pipe, the words had quite a musical and pleasing ring to them as they stole from the open stable door and out into the yard—at least so thought an attractive young woman, as she hied on tiptoe through the yard in the direction of the stable. On and on she crept, till finally she stood fair in the stable door, her white dress showing very hazily and ghost-like through the novel atmospheric conditions Baptiste had created.

As she halted, Baptiste was just breaking into the second verse, and she heard the words—

"J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle,
Que je me suis baigne,
C'est au pied grand chêne,
Que je me suis reposé."

She stood still with a smile on her face till the

singer, who was emerging from behind one of the horses, should step into line of vision and see her. She had not long to wait: scarcely was the verse finished than Baptiste hove from behind the haunches of the animal—and into utter consternation; for there, in the doorway, very dimly discernible through the invigorating atmosphere, the rays of the lantern revealed an airy, ghostly-looking figure. Superstitious terror fell upon the soul of Baptiste, and he stood gazing through the fog-like air with bulging eyes. Ever alert imagination, coupled with atmospheric delusion, actually made him think the lantern rays were passing through the shadowy object.

At this treacherous moment came back to memory the things he had read in that awful book about gods and goddesses, and the gazer's scalp moved as though it would fain depart. "What," thought he, "if the apparition should be one of those goddesses who delighted in torturing inoffensive mortals such as he?"—the idea was overpowering. He was about to utter a prayer to Bonne Ste. Anne to frustrate, for religion's sake, the machinations of all evil things, and thus add still greater glory to her name, when a laugh, one utterly at variance with anything tradition has ever handed down as coming from beings of another world, rang mirthfully through the stable, and the apparition tripped boldly into view.

Instantly forgotten by Baptiste were gods, goddesses, and spirits of every sphere—forgotten even by him, too, was the fame of Good Ste. Anne, for whose increased glory he had just been so anxious—as he recognised the sprightly little maid and hurried joyously to meet her.

But the laughter had left Katie's lips when he

reached her side, and paying no notice to his outstretched hands, she said severely, "And so you were afraid! Are you not ashamed of being so superstitious?"

Baptiste first placed a box for her to sit on, and then frankly admitted his fear and superstition but immediately, to her amusement, excused it on the novel plea that he had not known who she was when she stood in the doorway.

As soon as she was seated, a satisfied expression beamed on Baptiste's countenance; for to his gratification he perceived that, with a little kindly accommodation on the part of his guest, there would be ample room on the box for two.

But it was not Katie's intention that Baptiste should drift thus into indolence; moreover, she knew she would succeed better with the task before her if he were at a distance; so, innocently spreading her draperies over the enticing spot, and speaking as though she were unaware of his longing to be at her side, she said brightly, "I have come to see you about something very important, Baptiste; but you have no need to stop working."

Baptiste, who never dreamed of combating any of her commands, turned ruefully away from the coveted seat, and began to operate on the coats of the horses so vigorously, that one of them showed his resentment by flattening back his ears and letting fly with his heels.

Katie did not pretend to notice the unusual restiveness of the animals, and continued in an innocent tone of friendly gossip: "But oh, by the way, I was in the village to-day, Baptiste."

Her manner was such that Baptiste was mollified, and, desisting from his labours, he inquiringly said, "Ah yes, you go de village to-day?"

Her manner was very animated as she replied, "Yes, I was in the village, and would you believe it, I met an acquaintance of yours, someone who has been away. He asked about you, calling you friend Baptiste."

Into Baptiste's countenance there shot a look of suspicion, and he said quickly, "Who is dat you see, and he make some inquire about me, an' call me his frien'?"

"Oh, only Telesphore Lemieux. You know he thought he was going away for good when he left three weeks ago. He said something to-day about it being possible that he might remain here after all, and open a small store in the village. I could hardly get away from him, Baptiste, he talked to me so. He asked me if he might occasionally"—

"What you do dare? Are you going fool? You get de whip soon, sure!"

This outburst, of course, was not addressed to innocent and communicative Katie, but to one of the sleek animals which, with great asperity, had suddenly resented, with its heels, the way Baptiste had dived into its ribs with the curry-comb, just as Katie was narrating the request of Telesphore Lemieux.

"Gracious, Baptiste, how wicked the horses are getting!" exclaimed Katie, with wide open eyes and concerned face.

Baptiste, always in earnest about everything, gave way to the feelings which agitated him most, and paying no attention to Katie's concern for the horses, he scornfully shook his brush in the direction of the village, and said, "So dat ting of a man, Telesphore Lemieux, be sneak back again! What is right for call me a frien' of his? I'll go de village to-morrow and ax him dat myself." He

began to brush again, muttering savagely as he worked, "An' when I'm see him I'm break all de bone in his body."

"Baptiste!" exclaimed Katie remonstratively, shaking her head; "what threats! how you do go on! But I never heard you say a good word about Telesphore yet. He was very thoughtful of me yesterday, anyway, and told me that if ever he could be of service to me, I could rely upon him doing it, no matter what it was. One does not meet a friend like that every day, Baptiste."

Many a cleverer man than Baptiste would have been landed high and dry—as he was—by so expert an angler. Roused to jealousy and anger at the pleasure evinced by Katie at Telesphore's willingness to serve her, Baptiste idled over to where she was sitting, and began to impress upon her that Telesphore never had been, and never would be, so willing to serve her as he. So earnest grew his protestations, that had Katie been learned enough to have requested him to instantly undertake the twelve colossal deeds performed by Hercules, nothing but a ready acquiescence could possibly have been looked for.

As Baptiste stopped talking, and stood before her, with a look of readiness to do or dare anything, Katie shot an impulsive glance at him, a glance that would have been very pleasant to have intercepted; but, as usual, Baptiste was criminally slow. Rising unexpectedly and standing by Baptiste's side, Katie said eagerly, and with much confidence, "Indeed, Baptiste, I am quite sure there is no one who would sooner do a favour for me than you; and—and, Baptiste, there is no one I would sooner go to for one than you."

Baptiste's eyes fairly danced again, and from the

way he straightened out his shoulders, he looked ready for any task—even had it been as onerous as that taken upon himself by the Grecian hero, while the obliging Atlas went in search of the golden apples of the Hesperides.

Yet, despite all Baptiste's great willingness, Katie had scarcely unfolded the task she required of him than his look of valour died completely away, and he broke out, aghast: "You want me help dem elope, an' be witness for dem at de marriage? Oh, Miss Katie, not dat, not dat; it would break de heart of Monsieur d'Egmont, who has been de bes' frier' to me I never have."

Katie turned quickly and, with head thrown back, walked towards the door, curtly saying, as she reached it, "I should have known better, and have gone straight to Telesphore Lemieux."

Gratitude and high resolve were entirely shattered by this telling thrust, and Baptiste called her back, assuring her now that he would do whatever she asked.

The darkness had fallen quickly, and being anxious to return to the house, she rapidly explained everything to him: how Mademoiselle Severine and Monsieur Correggio—the young musician—loved each other: how Monsieur d'Egmont was going to for ever separate them by sending Severine to a convent; how these things had been told to her a little while ago by Severine herself; and how Mademoiselle Severine wanted them both as witnesses. The marriage was to take place at the village of L'Ange Gardien. He must meet them with a carriage that night, and drive them to the village. "You know, Baptiste," concluded the romantic pleader, "if we refuse them our help, they cannot elope; they will never be happy again, and no one will be to blame but us."

"What time dey want me to meet dem wit' de carriage?" asked Baptiste, striving hard to speak calmly.

"We will meet you at the bend of the road, about a quarter of a mile from the house, at eleven o'clock."

"I will be dare den, Miss Katie." There was a depression in his manner that made her feel uneasy, and she said sharply, "You are quite sure you will do this, Baptiste?"

"I have give de promise to you, an' I give it for your sake, an' so I keep it."

He spoke earnestly, yet sadly.

"And I, Baptiste, won't forget your kindness."

Taking up the lantern, he stood holding it above his head, that she might see the path leading back to the house. Just as she was fading from view, he saw her turn and wave her hand to him.

As she disappeared a gust of wind moaned through the trees, and a drop of rain fell upon his face. Holding high the lantern, he peered up at the overcast heavens, muttering, "Someting tell me dare is going for be trouble, great trouble for what is going happen dis night." The glow from the lantern showed his face to be keenly agitated.

Re-entering the stable, he sat for a long time with the lantern at his feet, thinking and listening to the truculent east wind, which, laden with moisture, was rapidly rising in strength and giving warning of a riotous night.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ELOPEMENT

"Oh heaven! that one might read the book of fate,
And see the end of this day's business ere it come."

THERE but remained one hour more of the day which had been so eventful to Severine and Giovanni—a day which their closing act was to make so eventful their future. As the bells in the tower of the venerated church of Ste. Anne sounded the eleventh hour but very few in the village that night heard them, for the storm had indeed risen in its might, and its boisterousness overwhelmed all other sounds. On, past the towers, the turbulent wind dashed, and, reaching the house of Monsieur d'Egmont, shrieked wildly about it. Against the darkened windows intermittent sheets of rain rattled furiously, as though bent upon arousing those within, but not a sound in the house betrayed that any of its inmates knew of the fury without.

But the darkness and silence of the place were deceptive as to what might be happening within; for suddenly the shadowy door, on the garden side of the house, was drawn slowly open, and two figures, muffled to the chin, stepped into the porch and looked apprehensively out at the evil night. As they softly drew the door behind them, the wind, which had known a momentary lull, swept wildly into the porch, filling it with uncanny, doleful

noises. To escape the penetrating rain, the figures drew farther into the porch.

Severine was brave of heart; but the strangeness of the hour, the presaging voices of the storm, coupled with the momentous step she was taking, worked upon her religious temperament. Drawing out a rosary, she prayed to be saved from any malign influences, and for forgiveness in thus leaving her father's home.

At her side shivered Katie Kimball, her face no longer pert and smiling, but forlorn and anxious; she had no fear of any malign influences, but she had a physical horror of storms. Had the night but been peaceful, she would have been as buoyant as of yore.

"It is after eleven, and perhaps he won't come," whispered Katie in the darkness. The idea of the quarter-of-a-mile walk in the storm to where the carriage was to wait well-nigh made her wish that Giovanni might not come.

As Severine was about to reply, a footfall was heard above the roar of the storm, and almost at the same moment a figure loomed up in the porchway. Even in the blackness Severine knew the outlines of the now loved form, and she whispered his name.

Giovanni drew her eagerly to him. "Dear, brave heart!" he whispered joyously. A great relief had come to him. In the few hours that had intervened since he had left her, he had been beset with all a lover's fears and doubts — misgivings which the stormy night had greatly intensified. He was whispering his gladness to her for her bravery and fidelity to him, when her hand, unexpectedly, was pressed upon his lips, and, catching him by the arm, she drew him hurriedly back into the porch.

Giovanni, in his gladness, had heard nothing but the voice of the storm, but upon Severine's alert ears had fallen a dog's muffled bark. He followed Severine till he heard the door of the house pushed open, and then he slightly hesitated, mystified by her inexplicable action.

Understanding his perplexity, but not having time to explain, she whispered quickly, "Quick, Giovanni, quick, enter the house and let me close the door."

He did as she requested. Katie was already in the shelter of the dwelling.

Giovanni heard the door softly closed and fastened. Then Severine whispered to him, "Friar Jean Fontaine is abroad to-night, and with him Pataud, his mastiff. Nights such as these always affect Jean, and he often wanders in this way. Pataud is fierce and dangerous to strangers. I heard his voice, and knew it would have been dangerous to have remained in the porch."

There presently came a lull in the storm again, and then the listeners distinctly heard a man's heavy footfalls. Could they but have looked out into the night, they would have seen Friar Fontaine rapidly approaching, his head and ungainly shoulders bent, and at his heels his great mastiff, Pataud. The weird, solitary walker reached the porch and passed on; but the dog suddenly stopped, sniffed the ground, and uttered a low, warning bark. The growl did not reach the friar, and he continued to walk on, his mind in dark, disturbed mood. Seeing the action of its master, the animal stood as though not knowing whether to follow him or not. But lowering its head again, it once more sniffed the ground, and then, growling loud and ominously, began to move in the direction of the porch.

This time its voice was plainly borne to the friar, and arrested his attention. Turning, he called out angrily to the animal to follow him. The beast paid no attention to the summons, but continued to advance towards the porch, growling all the time.

The thought coming to Friar Fontaine that perhaps something might be wrong, he quickly retraced his steps, reaching the porch soon after the animal had entered it. Pataud was sniffing and growling savagely. Cautiously the great hands of the friar were put out, finding their way into every nook and cranny of the porch—had anyone been there, it would have been impossible for them to have escaped detection. Finding nothing, the giant hands tried the door; but it was locked, and in the house not a sound was to be heard. But the beast still continued to growl.

Angered at what he thought the dog's folly, the friar turned fiercely to it and commanded it to follow him.

Not daring to disobey when spoken to in anger, the beast slunk after its master, stopping at intervals, however, to bark sullenly back at the porch.

Both dog and friar were far distant when the door of the house opened again, and the three figures flitted once more into the porch, and then out into the night. When they had safely passed through the garden and reached the highway, Severine could not resist stopping in her flight to look back at the house. The thought of her father and aunt, and of the pain which she knew would come to them, blinded her eyes with tears.

Giovanni stood silently by her side; he could not urge her to haste. Katie also was silent, for

the storm had abated none of its violence, and she would fain have urged her mistress to return.

It was the old struggle Severine was fighting—the struggle for supremacy of parental love in her heart over that which a lover had gained; and the result was the same as it has ever been since the daughters of men were married and given in marriage: the witchery of a lover's affection was more potent than of a father's. Finally she turned, and her trembling hand found Giovanni's. He raised it to his lips.

But, as she turned to go, the white stone towers of Ste. Anne's Church indistinctly loomed up and met her eyes. She stopped, this time with visible fear. "Giovanni," she said, with quick dread, "such a fear has come over me: what if the blessed Church should frown upon my action of this night?" The fear of the Church's displeasure was more momentous to her than aught else.

"If the Church unites us, what risk can there be of its displeasure?" he asked pleadingly.

She did not answer.

He took her hand again, and this time, whether for weal or woe, she followed him.

Baptiste, true to his promise, was found waiting with the carriage in the appointed place, and soon the church of Ste. Anne and the house of Monsieur d'Egmont were being left far behind. Baptiste headed for the little village of L'Ange Gardien, several miles distant.

The reason for Giovanni choosing this quiet little village in which to be married was because of his acquaintance with its *curé*, whose objections to uniting them, did he raise any, he felt would be easier to combat than if raised by a stranger.

Swiftly the carriage sped through the storm. A

intervals Giovanni conversed in a low voice with Severine, and now and again had a word for Katie.

The road, which owing to the mountainous nature of the country was very uneven, finally took a turn to the right, and they began to ascend a steep incline towards the village. Scarcely, however, had the carriage turned, when Baptiste abruptly pulled in the horses. As he did so, the monotonous clanging of a bell was borne to the inmates of the carriage by the whistling wind. With a startled exclamation, Giovanni let down the carriage window and peered out into the blackness. Nought met his gaze. His face betrayed peculiar agitation. The harsh, gruesome clangour grew louder.

Away up on the box, Baptiste, careless of the pelting rain, had uncovered his head and had begun to mutter prayers. In the carriage Severine was also saying prayers on her rosary—prayers for the dying.

Nearer and nearer sounded the clanging bell.

Suddenly out of the wall of blackness Giovanni saw a light—a light which advanced, slowly heralding a weird equipage. Carrying a lantern and bell, and coming down the road at a slow trot, was a man on horseback. A little distance behind him was a rumbling old cart, in which a priest was seated. When the light shone upon the priest's face, Giovanni sank back with a suppressed groan—
"It was the priest he had relied so much upon to marry them! To accost him at such a time Giovanni knew would be but to arouse dismay in Severine and horror in Baptiste: the priest was on his journey to some portion of his large parish to administer the last rites to one whose hours must be numbered. The doleful bell rung by the

herald on horseback was a summons to all who heard it, as they valued their future peace, to prayers for those who were *in extremis*. Not a *habitant* the country over would have taken the king's ransom to detain a priest when out on such a sacred mission. When Giovanni had first heard the bell, he had feared what was about to happen. His heart sank. The very Fates seemed to be striving against him: with the only priest in the village absent, what was he to do?

Stolidly, and without paying the least attention to the darkened carriage, the figure rode past the horse, holding high the lantern and ringing the bell. Then past the carriage window came the cart, the herald's light revealing the priest sitting with closed eyes and repeating prayers. He, too, paid no attention to the carriage. Slowly the weird cortège passed into the darkness and stopped, the racking tones of the bell growing fainter and fainter, until again only the boisterous voice of the night was to be heard.

Severine sat in the carriage with a look of alarm bordering on terror, on her face. When the bell could no longer be heard, she turned suddenly to Giovanni, and clasping her hands around his arm, broke out fearfully, "Oh, what an omen, Giovanni! what an omen!"

He knew the terror of the Church was again in her soul. Her awed mood, the strangeness of the unforeseen incident, and the moaning of the storm brought over him also a like dread of the Church, and he involuntarily said, under his breath, "Grant the frown of Rome may never be turned upon her!" But throwing off his brooding mood, he drew her passionately to him and whispered words of comfort and hope.

The sound of his voice alone would have brought peace, and soon she was quietly listening to the change in their plans which he advocated. He spoke with much anxiety, as though he feared she might object.

When he concluded, she said quietly, "I will do as you wish, Giovanni: you would not advise what would bring me sorrow."

Giovanni then arose and gave instructions to Baptiste, who turned the horses, and began to drive quickly in the direction of Quebec.

The plans for their marriage were now entirely changed. When they reached Quebec, Giovanni, Severine, and Katie were to take the early train for Montreal; while Baptiste was to return to Ste. Anne with the carriage. Giovanni deemed it wiser that they should be married in Montreal, instead of Quebec—where Monsieur d'Egmont might, if he early discovered their elopement, prevent the marriage.

CHAPTER XIV

CURÉ CINQ MARS

"Dark and threatening is the scowl
That gleams beneath his dusky cowl—
The flash of that dilating eye
Reveals too much of times gone by."

CURÉ CINQ MARS, the Jesuit pastor of old Bonsecours Church in Montreal, sat in his meagre study cheerless with its bare flooring, whitewashed walls and time-worn furniture, his stern, unsympathetic face bent in religious meditation. Although the morning was well advanced and he had risen almost with the break of day, to engage in prayer and self-examination, his fast was still unbroken. A year had elapsed since he had been appointed to this church, whose great age of three and a half centuries, and marvellous foundation, from the finding of a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin on the site, in no small way accentuated the man's towering pride in the majesty and power of his Church, and of its right to the most implicit and unquestioning obedience from all its followers. To the Church he had devoted all his life and energy, and would have looked upon it as no great sacrifice—had it but been for its increased glory—to have laid down his life for it. Hence, disobedience to the Church, or breath of murmur at any of its mandates, was to him an offence which called for the most severe condemnation.

And yet in spite of all this readiness of devotion and self-sacrifice, there was hidden in this complex being a secret ambition (scarcely admitted) to rise to a position of great honour and power in the Church: in brief, had he but possessed the quality of mind which would have enabled him to analyse each motive actuating his abnegation, he would have found germs of ambition intermingling with them all.

The physical appearance of the man was much in keeping with his most striking characteristics: the low brow, set protruding chin, prominent nostrils, small piercing eyes, and slight, yet alert, tense figure, all bespoke the man of dogged persistence and unswerving purpose.

A light still burned in the study, for a dense fog from the St. Lawrence—which swept past almost at the base of the church—poured into the city, and the day was as twilight.

Motionless, and with knitted brows, the priest continued to sit in meditation until a bell chanced to ring dismally in the sombre passage leading from the street to the study, and then he slowly rose, walked, lamp in hand, down the passage, and unfastened the door.

As it swung back, he saw confronting him, in the haze of the street, a tall lithe figure, whose dark and eloquent eyes were full of eagerness. At the curbstone, behind the figure, indistinctly loomed up the outlines of a carriage.

Without speaking, Curé Cinq Mars cast a quick, searching glance at his visitor, and motioned him to enter.

Giovanni obeyed.

After locking the door behind him, the priest, with a slight inclination of the head, led the way

down the gloomy passage to his study. Upon reaching their destination, the priest drew a chair up to his desk, and asked Giovanni to be seated. Now for the first time the priest saw his visitor distinctly, and as he looked into his face a puzzled expression came into his own—but in vain he sought to recall where he had seen his visitor before.

"I am at Monsieur's service," presently said Cinq Mars, as he also seated himself.

There was something in the manner of the priest that affected Giovanni unpleasantly, and he did not answer readily.

"I have been absent for some years," said Giovanni, recollecting himself, and speaking quickly, "and have not the honour of knowing *Monsieur Curi's* name. When I was a boy I knew most of the *curés* in the city." He knew his remarks were hardly in keeping, but he had felt the need of respite before introducing the important mission upon which he was bent.

"I am Père Cinq Mars, *curé* of this church," answered the priest, with perfect quiet and self-possession. Giovanni's face was calling up tantalising impressions to the priest, but try as he might he could not place their origin. His manner, however, showed no curiosity.

"Monsieur's name is strange to me," answered Giovanni, "as probably mine will be to him. My name is Giovanni Correggio; I wish to be united in marriage with a lady whom I escorted into the church before ringing for Monsieur. We have just arrived from the country, and have driven direct from the station to the church. We have travelled all night. I trust it will not be inconvenient for Monsieur to perform the ceremony?"

Had the craggy brows of Curé Cinq Mars hidden less effectually his small piercing eyes, Giovanni would have seen the gleam of recognition which flashed into them as he had told the priest his name.

Yet the priest's voice betrayed nothing of his thoughts as he replied, "No pressing engagement demands my time, Monsieur Correggio; of course Monsieur has the necessary witnesses?"

"Yes, I have the necessary witnesses," answered Giovanni quickly. "The gentleman who will witness for me is a friend whom I wired to meet me at the station; the lady who is with my *fiancée* accompanied us from the country."

Little did Giovanni guess, as he looked into the impassive face, what new suspicions it was masking.

"And the lady's name to whom Monsieur wishes to be united?" The priest's tone was suave and polite, and he rose, as he spoke, as though to prepare for the ceremony.

"The lady's name is Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont." Giovanni had also risen as he answered the question and partially turned towards the door.

Severine's name, however, had barely fallen from his lips, when a crash rang through the study. Starting round, Giovanni was just in time to see Curé Cinq Mars stoop quickly and slowly pick up from the floor a heavy book, which he appeared to have inadvertently knocked from the desk. As he laid the volume on the desk again, he said calmly, "I am ready. Will Monsieur kindly bring the lady and the witnesses?"

Giovanni needed no second bidding, and entered the church through a door at which the priest had pointed.

When he was out of sight, Curé Cinq Mars' face

grew dark and threatening. "There is disobedience and deceit here," he muttered, "or why are Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont, the lady's father, and Père Lacoste, Monsieur Correggio's patron, not here?" He stood with head bent, remembering now how he had first seen Giovanni years ago in Père Lacoste's study when he was a mere boy, and remembering how the priest had spoken of the lad as his adopted son. With Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont he was well acquainted, and guessed who the lady was the moment Giovanni had spoken her name.

The sound of approaching footsteps roused him from his brief reverie, and straightening his meagre frame, he exclaimed under his breath, "Still more defiance of the mandates of the Church!" He bitterly lamented now, as he had indeed innumerable times before, the humiliation suffered by the supreme pontiff in his loss of temporal power: had the Church but possessed the power in the country it should have, he would to-day be in a position, as its representative, to detain by force, if necessary, the young people, instead of having to submit to the humiliation of trying to thwart their intentions by diplomacy or admonition.

When Giovanni re-entered the study with Severine, Katie Kimball, and the gentleman he had spoken of, Curé Cinq Mars eyed them with unmoved countenance.

As the party ranged in front of his desk, he reached for the marriage ritual, saying as he did so to Giovanni, "The lady, of course, Monsieur, has the consent of her parents to this union?"

"Mademoiselle's mother is dead," answered Giovanni evasively.

Ignoring Giovanni, and turning to Severine, Curé

Cinq Mars looked at her piercingly and said, "But Mademoiselle's father is alive?"

Severine's face paled, but she answered firmly, "Yes, my father is alive, and"—

"And has given his approval to this union, Mademoiselle?" came the quick interruption.

There was falter this time in Severine's voice as she replied, "I regret that I have not my father's consent."

The thin, sinewy fingers of the priest tightened on the back of the book, and, turning to Giovanni, he said, in a tone which could not but arouse resentment, "But Monsieur has had some regard for the formalities of our Church, and has the consent of his family?"

"Neither of my parents are alive," answered Giovanni curtly and with hauteur.

Whatever diplomacy the priest had wished to use in order to make the lovers reconsider what he now knew to be an elopement, was killed by the haughtiness in Giovanni's voice, and he flashed out: "Yes, Monsieur's parents are dead, it is true; but it was his duty to get the consent of Père Lacoste, who adopted him, and who has been a parent to him. You both are Catholics, and know that approval such as I demand is necessary to marriages, under circumstances such as these. As for Monsieur, he but ill requites the kindness shown him all his life by a servant of our blessed Church, in attempting to marry by stealth a young lady of position, and without the consent of her father—Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont. As Monsieur sees, I am acquainted with his family as well as with the lady's, and it is my duty to forbid such a ceremony." The speaker's countenance was domineering in the extreme, while there was a haughtiness in his tone that Giovanni could not have deemed possible.

Thrown off his guard by the unexpected revelation of their identity, and by the priest's imperiousness, Giovanni stood for a few moments in complete silence. But the look of terror in Severine's face recalled his presence of mind and gave him self-possession. Instead of giving utterance to the resentment which rose to his lips, he quietly took Severine's cloak from the chair at her side, put it lightly about her shoulders, and said, as he laid her hand on his arm and turned towards the door, "I bid Monsieur good-bye, and regret that he should so completely have forgotten the courtesy and charity which the clergy are always expected to show to those whom they deem are erring. By performing the ceremony, Monsieur might possibly have ignored certain customs peculiar to the Church, but no serious transgression of any of its mandates would have resulted. Monsieur's refusal simply necessitates the performance of the ceremony in another church. Little wonder, Monsieur" (there was a peculiar meaning now in Giovanni's voice), "that the dictatorial attitude, assumed by Monsieur this morning, and shown by so many in high places in our Church, should be creating the open revolt among the people which is attracting the country's attention to-day."¹

Accustomed to the instant and implicit obedience on the part of his flock, Curé Cinq Mars heard Giovanni's open rebellion with anger so great that he could scarcely speak. Rankling his heart, deeper than aught else, was Giovanni's reference to the recent open breach between the people and the Church, the responsibility for which Giovanni had had the audacity to lay at the door of the clergy.

With scarcely audible voice, the priest said, as

¹ See footnote, p. 186.

Giovanni was leaving the room, "Monsieur shall find that the Church, whose power he holds so lightly, can still punish disobedience and open revolt, such as his this morning."

At these words Severine's face grew white as marble—once more the terror of the Church possessed her soul.

A few moments later the outer doors of the church opened and closed with their wonted querulous discord, and then Curé Cinq Mars was alone with his consuming anger. The shutting of the doors roused his mind to action, and, seizing his hat, he sped swiftly out of the church, reaching the sidewalk just as Giovanni was in the act of entering the carriage.

"One final word, Monsieur Correggio!"

Giovanni did not turn, but stood with his foot resting on the carriage-step. "This marriage," said the voice of Curé Cinq Mars at his side, "shall never be performed by any priest in this city. I am going now to the Archbishop's palace to inform the authorities there of this elopement, and special messengers will be despatched instantly to every Catholic church with commands to the priests not to perform the ceremony. The messengers will be at the churches almost as soon as Monsieur and the lady he is abducting can reach them."

Giovanni swung round in uncontrollable anger; but the priest was already speeding upon his mission, his dark figure in a few seconds being lost in the fog.

Knowing the priest would keep his promise, and now thoroughly antagonised, Giovanni decided that a Protestant minister should unite them, and instructed the driver to hurry to the address of an English Church clergyman.

When Severine heard of his new intention, he saw her waver seriously for the first time. But again he pled with her, and again she yielded her will to his, this time, though, with a fear and reluctance which greatly troubled him. In his ears kept recurring her foreboding words: "Giovanni, I have a strange presentiment of evil, if we are married outside the pale of our own Church." He endeavoured to dismiss the warning words from memory, but in vain.

Reaching the clergyman's house without further adventure, Giovanni and Severine, in the presence of witnesses, and after the procuring of a marriage license, were, in due course, declared by Rev. Stephen Thorold, minister of the Church of England, to be man and wife according to the ordinances of God and of the law—and who would have dreamed of thinking otherwise?

As the little party was leaving the clergyman's dwelling, it occurred to Giovanni that the house they had been married in was separated by but a stone's throw from the Archbishop's palace, whither Curé Cinq Mars had fled in such haste. He dismissed the recollection with a passing smile, but in the soreness of after years he recalled the incident in bitterness of spirit.

As though fate would have it, it so chanced that as the wedding party was leaving the house, Curé Cinq Mars, after leaving the palace, was passing it at that very moment. The denseness of the fog alone prevented his presence from being noticed. Recognising the party, the priest drew into the deeper shadow of the house. In his sudden mystification and surprise, Curé Cinq Mars continued to stand in the enfolding fog, his restive fingers entwining each other, and his heavy brows knitted in perplexing thought; he did not know that the house

was a clergyman's, and hence could not understand the happiness and triumph he saw in Giovanni's mien. But the carriage had scarcely driven away when something of the truth flashed across his fertile mind. The suspicion fascinated him. If what he suspected were true, there was placed in his hands that which would give him the opportunity of showing the far-reaching power and importance of his Church in Canada as it had not been shown for years.

Going to the house, he rang the bell.

The door was opened by the minister himself, whose clerical garb was gladness to the priest's heart.

The clergyman cordially invited his guest to enter.

With a politeness which hid every trace of perturbation, Curé Cinq Mars refused the invitation, and briefly explained that he simply desired to know if it was there where a couple, named Monsieur Giovanni Correggio and Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont, had just been married.

The clergyman's polite reply was in the affirmative. Something occurred to him to add that the contracting parties had secured a marriage license.

"Ah yes, a marriage license," said the priest enigmatically. He asked no more questions, but with profuse politeness hoped that his inquiry would not be considered unseemly—he was interested in the young people.

Very cordially the clergyman replied that he was always glad to be of service to a brother.

When the door separated them, the minister mused for a space over the incident, but it was soon forgotten. But could he have seen the change in Curé Cinq Mars' countenance as the door closed, it would have been remembered much longer.

Reaching the street again, the priest suddenly stretched out his hand in the direction the carriage had taken, and said relentlessly, "They, too, have defied the Church, and made light of its power in this country, and the consequences shall rest upon them. It is full time now that those in high places should be shown what power our Church really has in this land, and full time that their whisperings and twittings of its lost strength should be brought low."¹

¹ Curé Cinq Mars was referring (as Giovanni had done when in his study) to an incident in the General Elections of 1896, which created widespread comment and feeling throughout the country, when many of the bishops of the Catholic Church issued *mandements* to the faithful to vote, under pain of conscience, for a certain political party; but, despite the *mandements*, the party was defeated by an immense majority, and chiefly by the French Canadian vote. The event caused keen annoyance among certain of the bishops.

The author simply mentions this as explanatory, and not in any way as a comment as to the merits or demerits of the contending political parties at the time.

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CHAPTER XV

DARKENING CLOUDS

"Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."

SLOWLY the long hours of the night on which Giovanni had so faithfully promised Father Lacoste to return from Ste. Anne de Beaupré (after what was to have been his second and final visit to Severine) had winged their flight, and still Giovanni had not returned. The foggy morning that had witnessed his marriage, and which had succeeded the night of his expected return, was far advanced ere Father Lacoste gave up all hopes of his arrival.

Frequently, during the long watches of the night that was gone, the old priest had gone to the organ in the corner of his study, and the room had been softly filled with melodies that in past days had oftentimes brought rest and consolation, but which now had no longer their wonted power to soothe. There were times, as he had played or watched, that footsteps were heard in the quiet passage beyond, and then the aged kindly face had been bent in eager listening; but when the looked-for knock did not come, the tired eyes had again lost their sudden lustre, and disappointment and anxiety again possessed them. He had clung so desperately to the hope that Giovanni would surely return, recalling for his comfort how earnestly Giovanni had promised (the morning he had found him asleep in the study, a smile

on his lips, beside the dead fire) that no word of love should pass his lips to Severine, if he might but see her once more, and bid her adieu, before he should go out of her life and return to Paris.

He had consented to the request, but with misgivings, and now his heart ached with deferred hope. The reader knows how the witchery of the serenade Giovanni had played to Severine made him too weak to keep the promise, which he so believed he could keep, when he made it to the priest.

Nothing but the last messenger would ever still in Father Lacoste's unselfish breast his ambition for the boy whom he could not have loved more devotedly had he been flesh of his flesh.

When the night on which Giovanni should have returned had gone, and the yellow morning fog stole into the room, Father Lacoste still watched—watched for his coming even while the eventful marriage was taking place in the minister's house.

The dull, sombre day wore away at last, and evening once more came on apace. Still he waited and watched.

The night was yet young when the priest was roused from a depressing reverie by a knock. With anxious haste, he hurried to the door and threw it open: confronting him, stood Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont, with face strangely pale and set. Crushing back his disappointment, Father Lacoste held out his hand and warmly invited his visitor to enter.

Paying no attention to the outstretched hand, Monsieur d'Egmont strode past his host into the room. Not understanding, and being very desirous of news of Giovanni, Father Lacoste was about to question his visitor, when he was struck with the pallor and tenseness of Monsieur d'Egmont's coun-

tenance, and he asked, with earnest concern, "I trust Monsieur is not ill? he is very pale."

"Monsieur is unduly solicitous," was the cold rejoinder.

There was a pause, and Father Lacoste, anxious to broach the subject nearest his heart, and also wishing not to have it appear as though he had noticed his guest's peculiar manner, said, "I am very glad to see Monsieur." He then added quickly, "Monsieur Correggio has been a guest at Monsieur's house, and was to have returned last night; Monsieur can, no doubt, tell me when I may expect him?"

"When it may please Monsieur Correggio to return," began Monsieur d'Egmont in a suppressed voice, "I am not in a position to say. I am not even cognisant of his whereabouts, nor of the whereabouts of my daughter, Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont—whom he honoured my family by eloping with night before last."

"Monsieur!—Eloped, eloped with Mademoiselle d'Egmont!—Oh no, no!—Oh, *mon Dieu*, no, not that!" Helpless as a child, the old priest sank on a chair; the shock had been so sudden, the agony so bitter—Giovanni had fallen, his word forfeited, his future gone.

Before Monsieur d'Egmont could reply, the door silently opened, and the unexpected face of Curé Cinq Mars was seen.

Bowing, the new arrival said briefly, "I trust I do not intrude?"

"I will see you shortly, Curé Cinq Mars," said Father Lacoste, rising hastily, but very weakly.

Bowing very low, Curé Cinq Mars said, with curious monotony, to Monsieur d'Egmont, who moved as though about to withdraw, "I particularly

wish to see Monsieur on a matter concerning his daughter—*Mademoiselle Severine*." The door then closed behind the speaker.

The words, as they were intended, startled Father Lacoste, and going hastily to the door, he called to the retreating priest to enter.

As *Curé Cinq Mars* obeyed, and entered the room, Father Lacoste said hesitatingly to him, "Perhaps you have news of both the young people, *Curé Cinq Mars*? We were talking about them when you entered. God grant you may bring good news! we are sore of heart."

There was something, however, in the mien of *Curé Cinq Mars* that bespoke no mission of comfort, and Father Lacoste felt it, and his forebodings grew.

As for Monsieur d'Egmont, his manner betrayed none of the wistful eagerness for information shown by Father Lacoste, and his few words of greeting to *Curé Cinq Mars* were as formal and indifferent as though his daughter's name had never been mentioned—an indifference noted instantly by the visitor.

When they were seated, *Curé Cinq Mars* turned abruptly to Father Lacoste and said, without any attempt at preface, "Yes, I have news of the young people; they came to me this morning and asked me to unite them in marriage."

The cold, uninterested manner of Monsieur d'Egmont underwent no change at this revelation, but Father Lacoste's face blanched at what he knew now to be the truth, and scarcely knowing, in his agitation, what he said, he murmured, "And they were married by you—married by you, *Curé Cinq*"—

"No, not married by me," interrupted *Curé Cinq*

Mars, with a resentment he could not hide; "for I refused to perform the ceremony."

As Father Lacoste made an effort to rise, Curé Cinq Mars laid his hand on his arm, and went on, with smothered feeling, "I recognised them, and found that they were eloping. As Monsieur Correggio had not your consent, nor Mademoiselle d'Egmont yours, Monsieur d'Egmont, and as they were ignoring all parental rights—and still worse, were defying the customs and mandates of the Church—I did what was my duty, refused to perform the ceremony."

Monsieur d'Egmont's lips set a little more closely, but he was still silent.

Before the many anxious inquiries on Father Lacoste's tongue could be uttered, Curé Cinq Mars went on again, with visible anger: "But they paid no heed to my admonitions and commands, and leaving me, went elsewhere to be married; but such is the gratitude of children to parents and guardians to-day; such their disobedience to, and mockery of, the Church."

Rising, Monsieur d'Egmont said slowly, "Such indeed, Monsieur, is the gratitude of the children in our day." The words were spoken in a way that denoted no particular feeling, yet in their very lack of shading the shrewd mind of Curé Cinq Mars read a bitterness and unswerving purpose that no outburst of anger could have expressed.

"Parents have been too lenient, Monsieur d'Egmont, and sterner measures are needed," spoke Curé Cinq Mars relentlessly.

"Parents have been very, very lenient," replied Monsieur, as mechanically and unmoved as before.

Pitying the daughter of the unbending man before him, Father Lacoste broke out pleadingly, "Be

merciful, Monsieur, she is your daughter, your only one, and"—

"And," broke in Monsieur d'Egmont, losing command of himself for the first time, and speaking with a world of bitterness,—“and my only daughter has dragged one of the noblest and most patrician names of France through the mire, by uniting herself to the illegitimate son of an Italian organ-grinder!”

Curé Cinq Mars clutched the back of his chair in consternation: of Giovanni's real origin he had never heard before.

Regaining his composure as quickly as he had lost it, Monsieur d'Egmont continued quietly: “But this painful interview had better be terminated, Monsieur Lacoste. It is my duty to explain that my presence here to-day is not due to any desire, no matter how just, to upbraid Monsieur for using a friendship of years to introduce into my home a *protégé* whose every action has been but the natural sequence of the degradation of birth such as his. It might have appeared right to Monsieur that a secret such as Monsieur Correggio's should have been hidden from the world at large; but among friends, such as we were, a difference is usually shown. I had no intention of entering here to-day, but some impulse, as I was passing, made me do so. I can but apologise for the intrusion. After all, the blame for this degradation can alone lie with her who could stoop to such an ignominy.” Coldly inclining his head, he left the room.

Curé Cinq Mars turned away his face to hide its light: “He will never forgive her for this,” he said under his breath.

With his white head bowed low, Father Lacoste stood, sick at heart, silently calling upon Him who

pitieth as a father, to give comfort to the afflicted parent and to open his heart to a father's mercy.

When he looked up, Curé Cinq Mars was standing by his side. A sudden rush of feeling made the old priest lose command of himself, and laying his hand on that of Curé Cinq Mars, he broke out pitifully: "I feel that I can scarcely bear it; above all the world the boy was dear to me, with his imaginings and sensitiveness—dearer than existence. Since the day he came into my life, I have dreamed and planned of what he would accomplish in the future; but now, what have I to hope for? Trouble and distress are hovering over him, hovering over him in a way I cannot define, but which every consciousness is telling me will surely come." Despairingly shaking his head, he prayed aloud, "Queen of Heaven, thou who art all glorious in power, be merciful to them."

Stretching out his hand, Curé Cinq Mars, who had been listening with growing impatience, exclaimed with sudden vehemence, "I pray, O Queen of Heaven, that thou wilt show thy glory by demonstrating to the mockers and the disobedient that thy Church is not yet entirely shorn of her temporal power in this land, nor shorn of the power to command obedience, and legally punish, before all, those who disobey thee."

The strange, unexpected outburst caused Father Lacoste to start violently. Straightening out his majestic old figure, he looked searchingly into the face so full of purpose before him, and said warningly, "What is in your heart against the young people, Curé Cinq Mars? And, through them, what new humiliations would you bring on the Church by your visions of its right to command in temporal matters, and for it to exact terrifying obedience?"

Stung by the reproof in Father Lacoste's voice, and by the part he thought he was taking against the policy of certain of the bishops, Curé Cinq Mars passionately replied, "Ere many days pass, what is in my heart regarding Monsieur's *protege* and the daughter of the sorely humiliated man who has just left us, shall be known. You were never, Père Lacoste, one of those who strove for the glory of the Church. When tens of thousands refused to obey its recent mandates,¹ it was known you sided with them: little wonder the Church's glory is not what it should be! You have called my hopes for the returning power of the Church visionary, but you shall see that it has a power greater than all other sects in the land, a power that the Crown recognises above all other sects, a power superseding even that of the civil law, and a power, Père Lacoste, that you shall see humble to the dust, and in the sight of all, the two who have ignored the right of the Church to command them."

With the threat still on his lips, he hastened from the room.

"Ah, Giovanni—Giovanni!" The despairing, apprehensive cry was wrung from Father Lacoste's lips, as alone once more he sank to his knees, pillowing his silvery head on his hands.

¹ See footnote, p. 186.

CHAPTER XVI

ADAMANT

"When resolution hath prepared the will,
It wants no help to further any ill."

JUST across the river from Montreal, and plainly to be seen from the city, lies the picturesque village of Longueuil, as quiet and free from all business turmoil as though it were leagues away from any business centre. In the drowsy little village, French Canadian language, customs, and life are as strikingly intact to-day as they were in the early days when the Louis ruled over the destinies of the country.

Standing back on one of the narrow streets of the village, which ran towards the river, may be seen, through clustering trees, a rambling yet imposing old manor-house, its massive stone exterior frescoed with climbing ivy — such is the family seat of Monsieur Gustave d'Egmont.

An unusual thing has happened in the village, and has caused much comment: although it is yet in the heat of summer, Monsieur d'Egmont has returned with his family and servants from his summer house at Ste. Anne de Beaupré, where it had hitherto been his habit to stay till late into the autumn. The loquacious villagers indeed marvelled much, especially when the days slipped by and they failed to see Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont, who

custom it had been, when at home, to drive almost daily through the village.

About a week after Monsieur's unlooked-for return, the curiosity of the villagers regarding Severine was diverted by an announcement in the parish church one Sabbath morning by its priest, that he had to go away for a few weeks, and that Curé Cinq Mars, of Bonsecours Church, Montreal, had been instructed by the Archbishop to take his place. As a change of *curés* in a small French Canadian village is almost as much food for gossip and as momentous a theme for conversation as a change of Government, it was to be expected that the curiosity as to the whereabouts of Mademoiselle d'Egmont should have been lessened for a while; yet it so happened that scarcely had Curé Cinq Mars arrived in the village than there was an instant revival of the gossip concerning her. Very soon, too, what had only been suspected began to be whispered as fact—that Mademoiselle Severine had not returned with her father, and heads were solemnly shaken and hands uplifted. Matrons got into the way of discussing the missing girl only when their daughters were not present.

Monsieur d'Egmont had never mingled much with the villagers, and after his abrupt return, which had been within a week after the elopement, he remained more secluded than ever. To the regular priest of the place alone he had made mention of his daughter's elopement. But he knew that in time the news must reach the ears of the villagers and by them be spread far and wide. In the soreness of his wounded pride, he had been hardening himself for this ordeal, yet he was but poorly prepared for the startling change in the villagers when he realised they at last knew of his daughter leaving

her home. After this, if he chanced to meet any of them, they seemed unnaturally disconcerted and ill at ease, saluted awkwardly, and were evidently relieved to turn aside. In the faces of some he even read glances of pity. He was grievously annoyed. Even if, by some unwonted chance, they had learned that his daughter had married a man whose parentage was stained, there would not, even in that, be an explanation of their conduct—conduct which was not characteristic of them as a people. But the mystery of their conduct was ere long to be understood by him.

Three weeks had now elapsed since his return from Ste. Anne de Beaupré.

After leaving Father Lacoste's study, two days after the elopement (as narrated in the last chapter), Monsieur d'Egmont had gone back to Ste. Anne and had made arrangements for his instant return to Longueuil. Among the letters awaiting him on his return to Ste. Anne was one from Severine. It was dated from Montreal, and had been penned in evident haste the day of her marriage. Every line breathed of penitence and a great longing for forgiveness. She tried to explain her conduct by dwelling upon her undying love for the man who had made her his wife, upon his intense affection for herself, and how, if she had sent Giovanni away, and had entered a convent (it would have been to remain there for ever, for her love would not have died), the life and future of the man so dear to her would have been hopeless and ruined. She knew she had erred—erred very much—and wounded his just pride in her birth; but she tried somewhat to atone for this first serious disobedience of her life by recalling her loving and willing obedience during all the years of the past. Love, coupled with

fear of his command regarding the convent, had made her powerless to resist when the great temptation of her life had come.

A postscript added, they were just about to take the train on their wedding trip, and that she would return in two or three weeks.

After reading the letter, Monsieur d'Egmont, with set lips, had laid it on one side and begun to read others that were awaiting his attention. When he had read them all, he sorted them into two piles, one requiring answers or worthy of being kept, the other of no importance and to be destroyed.

When he left the room an hour later, among the destroyed letters in the waste-basket was his daughter's.

The news of the elopement had been broken to him, the morning following Severine's flight, by Baptiste, upon his return from Quebec with the carriage. With ashen face, the unhappy fellow had gone straight to Monsieur's study in his wet, mud-stained clothes, and had confessed to the part he had played—a part which he expected would mean instant dismissal. Monsieur d'Egmont had sat and listened with face that soon grew as colourless as that of the narrator—whom he did not dismiss, but simply waved to withdraw; he would not lower himself by venting his anger, and dismissing so lowly an instrument in the degradation brought upon him by his own daughter. When Katie Kimball returned on the day following the marriage in Montreal, she too expected sure dismissal; but it had not come. When she would have told him of the circumstances of the marriage—circumstances unguessed of by him—he had told her he wished to hear no explanations, and instructed her that in the future she would give all

her attention to his sister, who, like himself, did not expect to hear Severine's name mentioned.

To Josephine d'Egmont also the blow had been a very heavy one. She had borne it much differently than her brother. Although sharing much of her brother's pride of family, she had not his indomitable characteristics; besides, after the death of Severine's mother, she had been as a mother herself to the imaginative girl—for whom now no pride could quell her pity and longing. When her brother had told her that Severine's name for the future must not be mentioned between them, she had not tried to argue against such command, nor tried to soften his bitterness, knowing but too well how unavailing all such efforts would have been. And so it was, as the days went by and Josephine d'Egmont made no mention of the missing one's name, Katie, in her mind, charged her with being as unrelenting as her brother.

In the gloaming of a hot summer's day, a month after the elopement, Monsieur d'Egmont sits in the lofty library at the manor-house at Longueuil, his head bent upon his breast in deep thought. The quiet of the village at this hour, when night is marshalling its forces, is that of a veritable Sleepy Hollow. The room in which the thinker is seated is noble, not only in its imposing dimensions, but also in the quiet richness of its artistic furnishings. In the increasing gloom are dimly to be seen, in the vast bookcases which line the walls, unnumbered volumes. Monsieur d'Egmont sits on, heedless of the encroaching darkness. On the desk in front of him lies an open letter—one which the late mail has just brought to him from his son-in-law, Giovanni Correggio. At the thought of the

relationship the thinker draws a quick breath, and his humbled head droops still lower. He had read the brief letter but once, yet it had burned itself in his memory. It stated that in two hours hence—according to the time and place the letter had been posted—his son-in-law would call upon him, accompanied by his wife. For the sake of his wife, the writer had begged for reconciliation and welcome.

Deeper and deeper fall the shadows, until the writing on the letter is completely blotted out, and the solitary figure is all but indiscernible; still Monsieur d'Egmont sits on, thinking, thinking—thinking, as ever, of the undying disgrace that he feels has been cast upon his name. A month, instead of healing the wound, has festered it, and his slow, petrifying hardness has not known a moment's wavering. In two hours' time it would please them—in the honoured custom of eloping couples—to call upon him for forgiveness and his blessing! The cynical thought stung him, and, unable any longer to bear the misery which such communings ever brought, he walked moodily from the room.

Scarcely had he gone when a tall, gaunt figure carefully picked its way through the darkness into the room. On reaching Monsieur d'Egmont's desk it paused—a match flared up, and Friar Fontaine's face, wild and haggard, stood strangely out. Reaching his hand to the massive pendent lamps, the friar lit them. Exactly under the lamps is Monsieur d'Egmont's desk. Chancing to glance down, the friar's gaze falls upon the open letter on the desk. One sentence catches his eye. It reads: "Severine and I shall arrive in Longueuil on Saturday night, August 21, at nine o'clock, and shall call upon Monsieur, and"—

The burning, dilated eyes read no further, but sped to the clock opposite the desk—it was 7.15. "Marie be praised!" The exclamation which fell from his parched lips had not the ring of praise but of cursing. As he uttered the sinister thanksgiving he raised his face, and each pallid feature showed the striking change for the worse which had taken place during the past few weeks in the mind so long diseased. Before leaving the room, he bent over the letter again, to make sure he had made no mistake as to the date and hour of the arrival.

At about twenty minutes to nine, Monsieur d'Egmont returned to the room, his face unruffled and his manner composed. He had scarcely seated himself at his desk when Curé Cinq Mars was announced and shown into the room. The men greeted each other as though accustomed to meet. Curé Cinq Mars, somewhat covertly, laid on a table near by, two volumes in ancient binding.

"So Monsieur has heard from his daughter," said Curé Cinq Mars stolidly, "and she is expected to return to-night? It was very kind of Monsieur to remember my request as to letting me know when the young people contemplated returning."

"It is not surprising that you retain some curiosity about them," answered Monsieur d'Egmont in an uninterested way, "remembering how you refused, and that justly, to marry them. But, as Monsieur knows, my daughter's return is void of interest to me." In the speaker's voice there was a sad and striking absence of that old pleasing geniality and absent-mindedness that had so beautified it when the art of taxidermy (of late so sadly neglected) had engrossed every thought.

Curé Cinq Mars stole a look at the clearly cut profile before him, and said in a queer tone,

"Monsieur has been greatly wronged, and must keenly feel it. Suppose—er—suppose Monsieur should have it in his power to invoke retribution?"

"Were it," replied Monsieur d'Egmont, without haste, "only necessary for me to raise a finger to invoke the Nemesis of retribution, it would remain unlifted; those who have tarnished one of the oldest and most illustrious names of France are beyond the pale of my resentment—even though one of them be of my own flesh and blood."

"Just so, just so, Monsieur is right; but if retribution should chance to come without Monsieur's aid, would he raise a finger to ward it off?"

Turning to the speaker, Monsieur d'Egmont answered, "Monsieur speaks strangely to-night." Then, after a moment's hesitation, he went on, as though he attached no importance to the question, "As I have said, Monsieur, I have no interest in what may or may not occur."

Curé Cinq Mars' hands closed spasmodically, and mentally he said, "It is well; he will never consent to a reconciliation, and my duty is clear." There was a look of satisfaction on his face. Yet even at this moment the glory of the Church was really uppermost in the thinker's mind. He had smothered his satisfaction, and was just about to speak again, when, to his intense astonishment and annoyance, Father Lacoste was shown into the room—the man of all men he did not want to be present when Giovanni and Severine arrived. Curé Cinq Mars glanced hurriedly at the clock, in the hope that the hour for their arrival was yet distant and that there might be a chance of Father Lacoste leaving before they arrived, but the timepiece was on the stroke of nine—he could scarcely conceal his irritation.

If Monsieur d'Egmont experienced any surprise or annoyance, he did not show it. He had not seen Father Lacoste since he visited him in his study the second day after the elopement. Rising, he politely asked his visitor to be seated.

Curé Cinq Mars also partially arose and bowed stiffly to Father Lacoste, his face, although he strove to control it, showing anything but pleasure.

Upon entering the room, Father Lacoste had looked around with anxious concern. His face had cleared somewhat when he perceived it contained only the two men. But the presence of Curé Cinq Mars was an omen he would gladly have averted. He sat down in a position facing the two men. Bending his majestic figure slightly towards Monsieur d'Egmont, he said in his deep, resonant voice, "Monsieur no doubt is awaiting the arrival of his daughter—and—and her husband. They have written me they would be here to-night. I was anxious to see them, and so took the liberty—Monsieur will pardon me—of calling. It—it will be pleasant to welcome them home, Monsieur." There was pleading in the old man's voice as he concluded.

Changing the position of some letters on his desk, with a gesture of *ennui*, Monsieur d'Egmont answered, "No doubt they will be warmly welcomed by—you, Monsieur."

Father Lacoste's heart bled with pity for the returning ones. With all the wisdom given by seventy years of life, he had known, the moment he had looked into Monsieur d'Egmont's face, that the weeks which had elapsed since he had last seen him had not been hallowed by any thoughts of relenting. Although he himself had been deeply grieved by Giovanni's conduct, he had the charity to condone

and the magnanimity to pardon, and he was ready now with outstretched arms to welcome both a son and a daughter.

In the silence which followed Monsieur d'Egmont's words, the old priest cast desperately around, as one will when the happiness of some loved one is menaced, for an inspiration whereby the threatened danger might be averted; but before his task was ended and he could speak, Curé Cinq Mars' voice grated upon his ears, and he heard the angry, indignant words: "Monsieur Lacoste rejoices strangely over the return of one who has ignored all his kindness, and made so light of the Church, which"—

Floating in through the window, and interrupting the sarcastic words, came from the broad carriage-way leading up to the house the pounding of horses' feet and the sound of wheels.

Forgetting the feeling of resentment he had felt at the words of Curé Cinq Mars, Father Lacoste sprang to his feet and stood in a listening attitude, his face expressing both joy and dread.

Neither Curé Cinq Mars nor Monsieur d'Egmont changed their positions.

Presently the carriage stopped, and the sound of the door-bell was faintly heard.

Unable to subdue his feelings any longer, Father Lacoste turned quickly to Monsieur d'Egmont, and said, with a world of solicitude, "They are here. For the love of our dear Mother, be forgiving, Monsieur. They are now starting the journey of life, and the years will bring sorrow without help from us. Let them look back to this home-coming as one of the most precious of memories."

"What Monsieur asks," answered Monsieur d'Egmont, still without emotion, "is impossible;

from me there can be no welcome." The speaker's countenance was as granite.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage.

"*Fict justitia, ruat cælum*," muttered Curé Cinq Mars. Even as he exalted justice above the heavens, the door of the library opened, and there entered Giovanni Correggio and she who had dared so much for love. With a glad exclamation, Father Lacoste folded Giovanni in his arms.

Remembering his broken promise, Giovanni had no words, and could but stand with bowed head, his feelings too deep for utterance.

Understanding the eloquence of his silence, the old man could only think of him as though he were still a boy, and so, patting him on the shoulder, he broke out, in eager reproving at his visible emotion: "Nay, Giovanni—nay, nay, Giovanni."

Giovanni was treasuring up for a later occasion to explain all that was in his heart, and turned without speaking, as though to introduce his wife; but Severine, unperceived by him, had walked on and (as was the custom of the country after marriage) was kneeling, with bowed head, before her father for his blessing.

"Madame?"

The query, with its delicate blending of uncomprehending surprise, unconcern, and yet tincture of scorn, in which Monsieur d'Egmont uttered the word, as he slowly rose and glanced down at the kneeling figure, aroused Giovanni's resentment, and he would have started to her side and raised her, had not Father Lacoste whispered, as he detained him, "Be patient, Giovanni; he has been justly grieved; let her plead with him." Near where they were standing was a door which led to an anteroom and turning towards it, Father Lacoste whispered, "Let us

leave them together for a few moments, Giovanni; come in here."

As Giovanni reluctantly obeyed, and turned from the room, he saw his wife's hands outstretched and her beautiful sad face turned beseechingly to the cold one above her. He saw now too, for the first time, Curé Cinq Mars, whose gaze was fixed upon him in a manner he felt certain augured ill for him and his.

The coldness and cutting manner with which her father had addressed the single word to her was as a knife to Severine's heart; she had expected denunciation, anger, and coldness from him, but not such withering indifference as this. During her absence Severine had called up memories of how gentle and loving he had been to her as a girl, and from all this tenderness had tried to believe that he could not cut her from his life as though the past had never been; but his first word threatened the annihilation of every cherished hope.

Rising from her supplicating position, she held out her hands entreatingly to him, as he sat at the desk, and with all the pathos of her sensitive nature in her voice, brokenly uttered the word "Father."

But the appeal aroused no answering chord of sympathy in the heart that for a month had been hardening for the drama now about to be enacted. Looking at her, still unmoved, Monsieur d'Egmont answered slowly, "Madame Correggio has lost the right to use the term of *father* to me."

His unbending inflexibility was more than she could bear, and, covering her face with her hands, she tried to smother back her choking tears.

Monsieur d'Egmont sat in silence.

Curé Cinq Mars was now standing grimly at Monsieur's elbow.

When, finally, strength came to control herself, and she could break the crushing silence, she raised her face and again essayed to plead; but the sight of the two stern faces turned upon her was too much for self-control, and, sinking to her knees once more, she burst into a flood of heart-breaking tears. The unforgiving look she had caught on Curé Cinq Mars' face had overwhelmed her more than the hardness of her father's countenance; for into her soul, at his look, had flashed an agony of religious dread—above all things she had never dreamed of committing a deadly offence against the Church. Surely it was not possible that she had done so?

Crushed by this new terror, she prayed, between her sobs, for forgiveness; but her father gave no answer.

In her agony she turned to Curé Cinq Mars, caught his hand, and said piteously, "Plead for me, Monsieur; I shall never be happy if I leave my home like this." She had risen, and stood waiting for his answer in actual terror; for she felt it was her only hope of reconciliation, and would also either confirm or put at naught her fear that she must have committed a mortal error, rather than an act of simple disobedience, against the Church.

Drawing his thin small figure up to its fullest cubit, Curé Cinq Mars fixed his eyes on her who pleaded before him, and answered, with intense feeling, "Nay, Madame; it is impossible that I should plead for you—you who have scorned the commands of the Holy Church even more than the commands of the parent whose wishes you set at naught. Learn, Madame, that those who are out of the pale of"—

"*Curé, curé!*" she burst out, her stricken face turned to that of the priest, "for the love of the dear Christ, do not say I have committed mortal sin

and am out of the fold of the Church. : have been disobedient, I know ; but why terrify me with words such as these ? ”

Curé Cinq Mars answered her in a tone so peculiarly menacing that even Monsieur d'Egmont partially turned and looked at him. “The nature and greatness of your offence to the Church, Madame,” he said, “shall presently be revealed to you by your husband, and his lips shall shame in the telling.”

A cry escaped her and found its way into the room where Giovanni was sitting, full of unrest, listening to appeals of patience from Father Lacoste. The note of agony in the loved voice would have made him brave death itself, and no longer mindful of care and prudence, he hastened out of the room to where Severine was. Closely following him was Father Lacoste.

The deathly whiteness of his young wife's face and the horror in her eyes unnerved him. He hesitated for a moment, and then sprang to her side and encircled her waist with his arm. Her eyes were still fixed upon Curé Cinq Mars, and, following her gaze, Giovanni turned fiercely to the priest and said, “Monsieur does little credit to his cloth by trying to terrify those in distress.” Then, turning to Monsieur d'Egmont, he said bitterly, “As I expected, our visit has been in vain. I had some slight hopes that Monsieur, for his only child's sake, would not have been utterly pitiless. Had it not been for my wife's sake, I should not have trespassed on Monsieur to-night.”

The convulsive clasp of Severine's hands upon his arm recalled to him that, after all, it was to her father he was speaking, and recalled also how sorely his proud spirit must have been grieved ; so

his tone of bitterness changed, and he went on impulsively: "I know it must be hard for Monsieur to feel forgivingly towards me; but I beseech him to be reconciled to his daughter: without his pardon, I know, despite all her love for me, she can never be perfectly happy." As he ceased he stepped forward, his arm around his wife again, and stood before Monsieur d'Egmont with head slightly bowed, and whole demeanour showing respect.

Appealingly Severine raised her face to her father.

At this crucial moment, Father Lacoste, in his great anxiety and solicitude, exclaimed aloud in his deep, rich voice, "Gracious Mother, teach us how to forgive!"

The heartfelt prayer had scarcely been uttered when Curé Cinq Mars broke out vehemently: "Gracious Mother, rather show to the disobedient that thy laws cannot be broken with impunity, and thy Holy Church slighted and defied!" Other words seemed trembling on the speaker's lips, which he appeared to have difficulty in repressing.

Speaking as though he had not noticed the interruption, though inwardly disturbed by it, Monsieur d'Egmont answered Giovanni (and now in a tone he would have used to one entirely out of his station in life), "To Monsieur's plea on his wife's behalf I have no reply. Monsieur has strangely forgotten that there is no subject which can possibly engage discussion between us."

The blood leaped to Giovanni's face at the humiliating reply to his prayer for reconciliation.

An agonised cry escaped Severine.

Without a word, Giovanni caught her hand, placed it upon his arm, and then turned to leave the room.

The repression with which Curé Cinq Mars seemed to have been fighting ever since Giovanni had entered

the room gave way as he saw Giovanni's action, and, stretching out his hand towards him, he said, with a strange intensity and warning, that arrested his hearer's steps in spite of himself, "Before Monsieur Correggio leaves, he will do well to listen to something that I have to unfold of the most vital importance to himself and the lady—something he dare not remain in ignorance of any longer."

Giovanni turned haughtily and looked at the set face of the speaker, waiting for him to continue.

Father Lacoste's countenance had taken on an expression of trouble and concern, while on Monsieur d'Egmont's face there was plainly expressed perplexity and annoyance.

Addressing Severine, Curé Cinq Mars said, "I would ask Madame the favour of speaking to her husband alone."

Giovanni, in his anger, would have refused, but a look of anguished appeal from Severine made him accede to the request.

Turning, she would have gone alone into the anteroom where Giovanni had been; but this Giovanni would not allow, and he accompanied her to it. Once within the quiet of the room, he took her dear face between his hands, and passionately kissing it, said, with a touch of remorse, "Ah, my darling, my darling, the distress that I am already bringing to you!"

"Oh, Giovanni," she answered excitedly, "I could bear anything were it not for the dread that, in some way, I have committed mortal sin against the blessed Church." In her voice there was a wildness that awoke in him undefinable fears. Again in her manner there was something of the intense excitement he remembered having noticed in her the morning they had gone to the church at Ste. Anne

de Beaupré and when her aunt had chided her for the undue intensity of her supplications for the afflicted. Already what was to be the nightmare of the young husband's life was hovering above him!

Hurriedly Giovanni tried to dismiss from her mind the folly of the dread she had voiced, and after once more lovingly folding her to his heart, he again entered the room he had left. How little he surmised what was awaiting him there!

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAW AND THE LADY

"The law has cast me off from every claim
Of house and kindred, and within my veins
Turn'd noble blood to baseness and reproach."

† "'Tis false! 'tis basely false!
What wretch could drop from his envenom'd tongue
A tale so damn'd? It chokes my breath."

"I'll proclaim 'tis true, though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace."

DURING his absence Giovanni saw that Monsieur d'Egmont and Father Lacoste had reseated themselves—the former in front of his desk. Curé Cinq Mars, however, still remained standing by the side of the table upon which he had covertly laid the two old volumes. His hand rested upon the books. Father Lacoste's manner still betrayed anxiety and grave concern. Whatever might have been Monsieur d'Egmont's feelings at the unexpected turn events were taking, his face gave no clue. A barely suppressed exultation was in the mien of Curé Cinq Mars.

Walking to within a few feet of where Curé Cinq Mars was standing, Giovanni, his poetic face slightly flushed, yet fearless, said, with calm dignity, "I am prepared to listen, Monsieur; proceed."

"I will not keep Monsieur long in suspense," came the low rejoinder, "and when Monsieur realises the still deeper woe he is to bring upon

those whose lives he has entered, and sees what calamity he is to bring upon himself, and she who has trusted him, he will then understand how great was his folly in persisting, as he did, in disobedience to the Church."

The priest paused, and Giovanni answered quickly, "Monsieur will not forget that Madame Correggio is waiting for me?"

The answer brought a flush to the sallow cheeks of Curé Cinq Mars, but he made no reply, and turning now to Monsieur d'Egmont, he said calmly, "Monsieur will recollect—is it just to myself I should explain this—that in his righteous indignation he did not think it necessary to ask me who performed the marriage ceremony, after I had refused to solemnise it, between this gentleman and his daughter?" Looking at Father Lacoste, he added, "And you, Monsieur Lacoste, will recall the fact that you showed no curiosity as to the matter the night I called at your study when Monsieur d'Egmont was there?"

As he paused, a look of contempt came into Giovanni's face, and as Curé Cinq Mars looked at him he said sharply, "What does this mean? Was it for information such as this that Monsieur asked privately to see me?"

Monsieur d'Egmont also could not contain his annoyance, and he said coldly, "As to what priest performed the ceremony, Curé Cinq Mars, I think we have no interest."

Father Lacoste sat with arms folded across his broad chest, and alone offered no comment.

His imperious nature stung by the lack of interest and the impatience of those he was addressing, Curé Cinq Mars answered, with angry meaning, "You will see, Monsieur d'Egmont, that the question

as to who performed the ceremony between them is one well worthy of the very gravest attention; the elopement, in importance, is not even secondary to it."

He could no longer contain the tragic news which for the past month had been consuming him, and turning abruptly to Father Lacoste, he said, in a voice pregnant with meaning, "The marriage ceremony was performed by a Church of England minister, Père Lacoste."

Giovanni, irritated still further by what he deemed the frivolity of Curé Cinq Mars' words, made a motion as though he were about to turn and rejoin his wife.

Monsieur d'Egmont impatiently tapped the floor with his foot.

Giovanni was actually leaving the room, when his attention was attracted to Father Lacoste—the old priest had risen, and was grasping his chair for support, his eyes staring and his breath coming quickly.

Curé Cinq Mars' eyes were intently fastened on Father Lacoste's face.

Astonished at the unlooked-for agitation of Father Lacoste, which he never dreamed of attributing to anything Curé Cinq Mars had said, Giovanni hurried to the old priest's side, and was in the act of stretching out his hands to support him, when the old man pointed at Curé Cinq Mars, and with his sonorous voice ringing with anger, burst out: "And for a month, Curé Cinq Mars, you have hid this knowledge in your breast, knowing all it meant to the young people and those connected with them! My ears surely deceive me—shame, Monsieur! shame—shame!" His wrath was greater than his strength, and he sank back on his chair, his countenance full of fear.

Still more astounded, Giovanni stood for a time

looking down at the agitated priest, and then he said, with painful distinctness, "*Père*, why this agitation? Surely it cannot be caused by the unimportant question as to whether priest or minister performed the marriage ceremony between Madame Correggio and myself?"

No reply came from Father Lacoste, and Curé Cinq Mars broke in grimly: "Monsieur Correggio, I will answer for Father Lacoste. His agitation is caused, and caused alone, by the question as to who performed the marriage ceremony. You would make light of it, but listen to its undreamed-of importance to yourself. On the question as to whether priest or minister performed the ceremony hangs the question of the legality of your marriage! If, Monsieur Correggio, a Protestant minister undertook that function, the lady in yonder room is no more your wife than if you had decided a marriage between you was unnecessary and had lived together without it. Learn now that a marriage performed anywhere in the province of Quebec by a Protestant minister between two Roman Catholics is invalid, not only in the eyes of the Catholic Church, but also in the sight of the British law governing us. Such, then, being the law of the land, you will understand what position you placed her in, whom you think your wife, when you defied the Catholic Church and fled that morning—after I had refused to marry you—to a Protestant minister to perform the ceremony—a ceremony which he had neither the civil nor ecclesiastical right to solemnise."

It was as though the silence of the grave had fallen when he ceased speaking.

Monsieur d'Egmont was standing and with ashen face looking mutely at the pitiless man who had given voice to such direful words.

Father Lacoste's face was hidden in his hands.

The fearful quiet was broken by Giovanni stepping swiftly up to Curé Cinq Mars' side. "Curé Cinq Mars," he began fiercely, his fingers twitching nervously, "as the Virgin lives, your garb shall not protect you from the punishment which would be meted out to other men if the infamous words you have uttered are, as I believe them to be, false. Now, Monsieur, quickly, your authority for the shameful position you would place the lady in, who is my wife, before the world."

Looking fearlessly up into the blazing eyes above him, Curé Cinq Mars, his thin small frame drawn up to its fullest height, answered quietly, "Monsieur's threats inspire me with no fear. He demands proofs of the assertions I have made; such demands are reasonable, and I am prepared to give them." The confidence of the reply, the continued silence and shrinking of Father Lacoste, and the palpable alarm now in Monsieur d'Egmont's face, brought an overwhelming fear to Giovanni. Could it be possible that the words he had heard could really be other than the ravings of a madman?

As he asked himself the question, he saw Curé Cinq Mars draw towards him, on the table before which he stood, the two old volumes.

With both hands resting on the books, Curé Cinq Mars looked across into Giovanni's wrathful yet apprehensive face, and said firmly, "The statement I made, Monsieur, was that your marriage is not recognised as a holy sacrament, nor has it the least validity in the eyes of the law, the reason being that a Protestant minister performed the ceremony between Mademoiselle d'Egmont and yourself—two Roman Catholics."

Holding the books that Giovanni might read the

titles, he went on: "These volumes will prove the truth of what I say. As Monsieur sees, these are books of the Civil Statutes of this province. One of them contains important judgments based upon the statutes."

Opening the books at marked passages, he continued, as he bent partially over the table and traced with his thin finger the marked clauses: "These passages, as Monsieur will see, are records of two judgments delivered in the Superior Courts, in the cases of *Martineau v. Raymond*, and *Findlay v. Bruchesi*,¹ and will have particular interest for Monsieur, as they have decided for all time the important contention, raised by the Roman Catholic Church in this province decades ago, that all marriages between Catholics performed by a Protestant clergyman were, and should ever be, invalid, both ecclesiastically and civilly. That Monsieur may be able to verify what I am about to read, I have written down on this slip the names of the volumes which give the law on this contention, and also the volumes in which are recorded the two judgments in question."

He laid the slip on the table near Giovanni.

The following references were written upon it:—

"25 Lower Canada Jurist, p. 261.

"3 Legal News, p. 512.

"5 Legal News, p. 51.

"3 Themis, p. 206.

"2 Lower Canada Jurist—passages of illegality of marriages between *Martineau* and *Raymond*, and of *Findlay* and *Bruchesi*."

Giovanni glanced down at the slip, but did not deign to take it up.

This apparent unbelief on Giovanni's part, that the cases could have any serious import whatever to

¹ The names, for reasons which will be obvious, have been changed.

him or his, was the serpent's tooth to Curé Cinq Mars, and a sudden glow came over him at the thought of having it in his power to bring low such stiffnecked behaviour and adding, at the same time, to the glorification of the Church. With threatening mien, he again drew the volumes to him, opening one of them at a passage specified on the slip, which gave a brief history of the facts connected with the two marriage cases cited. So far as the circumstances of the marriages were concerned, Giovanni soon realised that they had been, indeed, very much like his own; yet this did not prove them illegal.

Having established the similarity of the marriages to Giovanni's in the most important particulars, Curé Cinq Mars now turned rapidly to other passages, and read the contentions that had been raised before the Courts as to their invalidity.

Finally coming to the summing up of the cases by the judges of the Superior Courts, and to their judgments thereon, Curé Cinq Mars glanced quickly up into Giovanni's tense countenance, and said cuttingly, "I beg Monsieur's careful attention to the passages I now shall read—and which he will also find jotted down on the slip it has so pleased him to despise." Slowly tracing the passages, he read: "'Their honours, the judges of the Superior Courts, in summing up the evidence in the two cases submitted to them, said the evidence before them to adjudicate upon was, after all, of the simplest nature, namely:—Two marriages had been performed by Protestant clergymen, the contracting parties being Roman Catholics. The law had been appealed to to declare said marriages null and void, on the contention that they were contrary to the religious and civil rights of the Roman Catholic Church, as guaranteed by the English, when

English rule superseded French rule in the country. The Court fully realises the great gravity of the two cases before it, the contracting parties now living together as though legally united in marriage. With the greatest care the Court has examined the various Treaties and Acts between Britain and France in regard to Canada, to ascertain just what are the religious and civil rights to-day of the Catholic Church in this province. History shows that in 1759, by the defeat of Montcalm, Canada passed from French to British rule. In 1762 was signed the memorable Treaty of Paris, by the terms of which, and by the conditions laid down in the Quebec Act of 1774, the French were guaranteed the continuance of French law in relation to all civil matters; while to the Catholic Church was perpetuated all the powers and privileges possessed by it under the French régime. In many respects these powers and privileges were far-reaching and of the very greatest importance, as is shown by the right of the Catholic Church to-day to invoke the law in order to compel its followers to pay its annual tithes, its right of separate schools, as well as many other rights peculiar to the Church when under French rule. Hence, it being quite clear by the Treaties that the status of the Church as it existed under Louis xv. was to be perpetuated, the questions arise as to what were the rights peculiar to the Catholic Church, under the French régime, in regard to marriage. We have found that, according to the civil law of Louis xv.,—which civil code holds good to-day,—the tenet of the Catholic Church was recognised, that marriage was a holy sacrament, a spiritual and religious bond which the Church alone had the right and power of administering to its followers, and over which the civil law should have

no jurisdiction whatever. In other words, the Roman Catholic Church contended then, and still contends, that the ceremony of marriage is an ecclesiastical one, and that no other religious or legal body, or bodies, can perform the marriage ceremony between any of its followers. It must be mentioned that the religious marriages as solemnised by the Catholic Church were, however, to entail all the civil rights pertaining to law. Such civil rights being perpetuated to this day under British rule, the Court has but one course open to it: to declare the two marriages in question null and void, being contrary to civil and ecclesiastical law; and that the Catholic Church can now alone be appealed to by the parties whom this judgment declares not to be legally bound together, to legally unite them in the bonds of matrimony.'"

Curé Cinq Mars laid down the volume he had been reading from. His woeful story had now been unfolded. In his bearing was commanding and stern dignity.

Monsieur d'Egmont was the first to speak. "*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, his pride for a moment humbled by the keenness of his pain and surprise, "what new indignity is this that has been brought upon me?"

He had never imagined that any deeper disgrace could come to him than the *mésalliance* on the part of his daughter. But now it was revealed, she was not legally united to the man she had eloped with. His torture was almost greater than he could bear.

Monsieur d'Egmont's exclamation roused Giovanni from the numbing horror which had fastened itself upon him as he had listened to Curé Cinq Mars adducing fact after fact to bear out the astounding assertion he had made, that his marriage to Severine

was illegal. In his suffering a single gleam of hope remained—that the judgments cited in the two marriage cases were so ancient as not to be applicable to similar cases in this age. Paying no heed to Curé Cinq Mars, he turned and looked at Father Lacoste, whose head was bent upon his breast, and said, "Père Lacoste, from you alone will I believe that this unheard-of thing, stated by Curé Cinq Mars, is true. Tell me, *père*, is not the law he cites ancient, and not applicable in our day and to our case?" He had striven hard to speak calmly, and with an air of hope and confidence, but had sadly failed.

Not waiting for Father Lacoste to reply, Curé Cinq Mars made answer: "The law is not ancient, and is as binding to-day as it was over two centuries ago. Moreover, one of the judgments I have cited was delivered not over a quarter of a century since."

Still Giovanni paid no heed to him, and continued to look to Father Lacoste to reply.

Slowly, at last, the old priest raised his head, and looking at the suffering face of the questioner, said bitterly, "Would I could say that this law did not exist to-day and was not applicable to you, Giovanni!"

With an involuntary exclamation, Giovanni started back—his last hope had now been slain.

The look of agony in the young face roused the burning indignation of Father Lacoste against him who had been the cause of it, and, with his regal figure erect, he swept over to where Curé Cinq Mars was standing, and whose face wore the expression of an avenging Nemesis.

Towering far above the smaller priest, in his superb physical proportions, Father Lacoste looked scathingly down upon him, and said, his voice rolling through the great room, "Again, Curé Cinq

Mars, I say I would shame to do what you have done this night; but it is well in keeping with your hard disposition. You knew the error the young people had fallen into immediately after the ceremony in the minister's house, and yet you put forth no effort to acquaint them, or those interested in them, with it. Twice only in two and a half centuries has the civil law been appealed to by our Church to sustain its contention as to the illegality of such marriages, hence this strange law you have read is almost entirely unknown to the people and the clergy of other denominations.¹ Such being the case, the error the young people committed is not to be wondered at, and could, as you well knew, have been explained to the Archbishop, who, in all probability, would have consented to our Church solemnising anew the marriage, and thus making their union honourable in the sight of all men. Their innocent error would then have been hidden for ever. But such a course was too charitable for you, Curé Cinq Mars. Incensed at them—it is true their course was not right—you rejoiced in the calamity they had fallen into, and looked forward to the time when you might be able to punish them. Such longings were but the cravings of revenge, Curé Cinq Mars, try as you may to believe that all you do is done with a single eye for the glory and increased dignity of the Church. Search deep enough into your heart and there you will find far more personal resentment than purity of intent for the Church's glory in this thing." Stretching out his hand, he said, in a voice of denunciation, "It is characteristics such as you possess, Curé Cinq Mars, that the Church has to thank for its recent tribula-

¹ It may be said, a third case has been brought before Canadian Courts, as this novel, which was begun in 1896, is going to press.

tion. The *mandements* that were recently issued to force the people to the polls to vote in a way they did not wish were issued by the bishops, and upheld by certain priests who cared naught for what the people called their rights, but who used the doctrine of obedience to rule them with a rod of iron. Of such priests, as you well know, you were one, *Monsieur le Curé*. You still are continuing in the same course, and now would crush to the dust two young lives because of an act of disobedience which you magnify to heaven. Still adhere to this course, and the Church has in store for it still greater humiliations!"

Father Lacoste ceased. His indignation had increased as he had spoken, and his figure had grown still more erect and imposing, until he towered above Curé Cinq Mars as a very giant in his wrath.

So striking, indeed, was the physical difference between them, that it forced itself home to Curé Cinq Mars, and intensified his hostility. Inwardly writhing at Father Lacoste's words, as was so natural with one of his imperious nature, he had been able to control himself, until at his door and at the doors of other priests—who maintained that the most unquestioning obedience must be given by the people in all things—was laid the sole blame for the recent defiance of the masses, and then his anger broke forth. Wrathfully facing Father Lacoste, he said, "You know full well, Père Lacoste, that the disobedience of the people was due to the vacillation of a section of the clergy who favoured what they termed more liberty for the masses. You were one of such. Years ago the people looked to the clergy in this country for guidance in all things, but then the doctrine of

implicit obedience had not been assailed by traitors from within. Now, throughout the country, there are malcontents among the Church's followers who speak openly of what they term to please individual rights. When ordered by the bishops to follow out certain courses by public *mandements*, they demand that they be not interfered with in such matters. Such chaotic disobedience, Monsieur Lacoste, you can take much credit for. Just how little you really care for the divine prerogative of the Church to command, how little you care for its acquired rights in the province and for its dignity, you are characteristically showing by openly taking the part of these two young persons, who have not only defied parental control and the control of our Church, but have actually spurned the laws of the land concerning our Church—laws which the Courts have twice publicly enforced. It is well, Monsieur, that the State is more jealous of our rights than you—you, one of our own priests!" His voice rang scornfully as he concluded.

Father Lacoste turned abruptly away from the irate speaker, and, as he did so, Giovanni said brokenly to him, "This fearful law, *père*! There is nothing now but sure disgrace to look forward to; the truth will soon be in every mouth."

"With the Virgin's help," quickly answered Father Lacoste in a low voice and with an air as though suddenly recollecting, "there shall be no disgrace. I will go immediately to the Archbishop, with whom I have much personal influence, and get under his seal permission for you to be secretly married by our Church. I feel sure he will not refuse. What has been revealed in this room will be known only by those who have heard it—Curé Cinq Mars, I am sure, will go no farther in the

matter. When once you are married by our Church, none will ever think of doubting but that you were united by it at first. But even if there should be some who might hear that you were first married by another Church, and learn that you were afterwards united by the Catholic Church, it would create nothing more than petty gossip, on account of the almost universal ignorance of the enactments making marriages between Catholics invalid when the ceremony has been performed by a Protestant minister. You can judge of how unknown this old law is, when the minister who married you never doubted but that he had bound you legally together. So be of good heart, Giovanni, be of good heart. The dear Mother has more pity than many of her servants, and will guard you and her you love from the finger of scorn because of this innocent mistake."

As a drowning man grasps at a straw, so Giovanni clutched at this hope. "God grant you are right, *père*," he said, as he caught the old priest's arm, "and that the secret of this first marriage may be for ever hidden, and that the Archbishop will not refuse his consent to have us secretly united by our own Church. The bare thought of the villagers knowing all, and pitying, and drawing away from Severine—such as they surely would do—is madness."

Deeming it wise that Curé Cinq Mars should be acquainted with his intention, and being anxious also to relieve some of the still deeper humiliation he knew Monsieur d'Egmont was suffering under, Father Lacoste informed them of his plan for the remarriage of the young people and the covering up of their first marriage.

Monsieur d'Egmont, though inwardly relieved at the information, showed no sign of relenting of his

decision to shut his daughter from his life, and merely bowed his head. As for Curé Cinq Mars, who had seated himself while Giovanni and Father Lacoste had spoken so rapidly together, he deigned neither to make comment on Father Lacoste's plan nor give any sign that he had even listened to it.

In the faint hope that perhaps Monsieur d'Egmont, in his relief, might now be inclined to relent, Father Lacoste went over to him and hazarded a final plea for reconciliation—at least to his daughter. His mission failed. "Monsieur has already my answer, I believe," was the expected reply. The words were uttered aloud and distinctly. They reached the ears of Giovanni, and put away all thought of further pleading.

As Father Lacoste turned away from Monsieur d'Egmont, Giovanni said to the priest, in a tone of confidence he meant should reach Curé Cinq Mars, "And what day, *père*, will our Church unite us?"

"To-morrow is the Sabbath," answered Father Lacoste, "and after mass, at the Bishop's palace, I will see the Archbishop. The following morning, Monday, I will come and go with you and your wife to the palace, and the marriage shall take place there at once." On the word "wife" Father Lacoste had laid an emphasis as delicate and tender as could a woman, and Giovanni could have worshipped him for it.

But the knowledge that the Sabbath would have to drag its weary course ere the nightmare he must labour under was taken off his mind, and she who was his wife could be declared honourably and legally wedded to him, created such a sinking at heart that he could scarce keep his disappointment and apprehension from his face.

Monsieur d'Egmont now rose. His manner showed he considered the interview at an end.

Bowing slightly to Monsieur d'Egmont, but ignoring Curé Cinq Mars, Giovanni turned towards the room where she who knew not that she was neither wife, maid, nor widow so sorrowfully awaited him. As he passed Father Lacoste, the old man whispered, "Be hopeful, Giovanni; neither the villagers nor anyone else will ever know."

His whispered words had been louder than he thought, and had caught the alert ears of Curé Cinq Mars, who turned quickly, as though desirous that the expression of his face should not be seen. He knew the villagers (it had happened since his coming) had begun to whisper of there possibly having been something more serious than an elopement and a marriage, and although they knew nothing definite, they had not been able to meet Monsieur d'Egmont without the restraint which he had been so unable to understand.

Yet it was not of the whispering villagers Curé Cinq Mars had been thinking when he had so quickly turned his head. The truth was, that at the whispered words of Father Lacoste to Giovanni there had come to memory the woeful thing he meditated for the glory of the Church on the approaching Sabbath.

Just at the instant Giovanni was about to open the door of the anteroom where Severine was awaiting him, his eye chanced to light, for an instant, on the main door, by which Severine and he had entered the library, and which he distinctly remembered having closed after them. The door was now several inches apart, yet no one, he was positive, had entered the room or left it since their entrance. "Could it be possible," he thought, with new alarm,

"that an eavesdropper had overheard what had passed in the room—overheard that which he would now willingly give his life to hide?" Even as he asked himself the alarming question, and while his eyes were yet on the door, he distinctly saw a powerful hand dart into the room, on a level with the floor, grasp the bottom of the door and swiftly and noiselessly draw it shut. It was done in the twinkling of an eye.

Poor distracted Giovanni! It was well, after all, that his troubled gaze could not pierce the door and see out into the broad corridor beyond, where a great ungainly figure was hurrying rapidly along. At the end of the corridor was a flight of stairs which led down into the yard. Down this the figure sped. Reaching the yard, it turned abruptly to the right, in the direction of a great dog-kennel. When the kennel was reached, there was a savage growl, and a huge mastiff sprang at the figure.

"A-bas, Pataud."

The beast knew the voice in an instant, and grovelling on the ground, whiningly licked the powerful hands reached down to unfasten its heavy chain.

"At last, Giovanni! I thought you would never come. Will papa forgive? What did Curé Cinq Mars want to tell you? Will he relent? And, Giovanni, did he say the Church"—

"There, Severine, there!"

Giovanni had entered the anteroom again, the strange incident of the closing of the library door adding its quota to the burden of dread and secrecy he must now bear. The manner of her questioning showed her still peculiarly unstrung, and he had scarce known how to answer.

Try as he might, he could not hide his distress from her, and, reading something of it, she became

more calm, and in the dear shelter of his arms waited for him to speak.

Kindly, and with deep respect, he began to speak of her father, trying to soften his continued refusal of reconciliation by dwelling hopefully on the future, when time, which heals all wounds, would surely cause him to relent.

But tenderly as he delivered his message, he saw her lips whiten and tremble.

Ah, that this were all he would have to relate!

He knew what she would now question him about, and dreaded to answer it infinitely more than the question he had answered about her father.

"And Curé Cinq Mars, Giovanni? Did he wish to let me know through you that I—I was mistaken in thinking I had committed some deadly offence against the Church?—that with penance I can win its forgiveness?" Again there was that excitement and unnatural fear in her face and voice which smote at fears he could never voice, and which unmanned him more than would all the thunders of Christendom. As to what had really occurred in the room, he dared not tell her. Later he would ask, not letting her know the truth, to consent to the Catholic Church also lending its blessing to their union. To this he knew she would give ready assent—never imagining that he had any other wish than merely to please her religious feelings in the matter.

He was suffering keenly, and at the thought of her dread of Curé Cinq Mars, and the memory of that priest's relentless attitude towards them, resentment again overcame Giovanni, and, holding her tightly to him, he wrathfully said, in answer to her questioning, "You fear Curé Cinq Mars and the

Church too much, Severine; what else is the mission of the Church but to pardon?"

She drew quickly away from him. "Hush," she said, looking at him in pain and distress; "the priests are the representatives of Christ, and so know the will of the Church, and what constitutes right and wrong, as we cannot do." Her face grew very pained, and she went on: "But your anger, Giovanni, only too plainly tells me that it was not to convey a message of peace that Curé Cinq Mars detained you."

Again the fear at what Curé Cinq Mars had unfolded mastered Giovanni, and, mistrustful of the comforting hope that Father Lacoste had held out, he drew her suddenly to him, as though she had been standing on the brink of some great peril, and broke out fearfully: "Come, Severine, we will go, go away from here altogether, go to some country where we shall have peace and happiness."

Startled at his palpable fear, she could but stand and look at him. The pain and care in his face gave her strength to hide her distress, and she said bravely, "You shall tell me later, Giovanni, what Curé Cinq Mars said. Come, dear, we will go—but not away from the village."

As they passed out into the library, Giovanni saw that Monsieur d'Egmont and Father Lacoste had gone, and that Curé Cinq Mars alone remained.

With his priestly robes drawn about him, the priest was standing with the fateful volumes under his arm, as though also about to depart.

Severine looked towards the dark stern figure, longing plainly showing in her face that he would not at this the eleventh hour allow her to go without a word of peace.

As the *cure* fixed his small piercing eyes upon

hers, she stopped suddenly, as though her feet had been chained to the floor, and raised her gloved hands in mute appeal to him.

"After penance, and after the honour and power of the Church have been vindicated," said Curé Cinq Mars, looking at her without sign of relenting, "there may be forgiveness, er—er—*Mademoiselle*!"

Never for a moment thinking but that he had used the old term "*Mademoiselle*" to her in other than mere forgetfulness, she was about to tell him now gladly she would do any penance to appease the Church, no matter how hard it might be, when Giovanni, his face crimsoned with passion at the meaning he knew which the priest had intended by the term, turned to her and said, "Father Lacoste, Severine, and not Curé Cinq Mars, is best fitted to interpret the will of the Church to us and to enlighten us as to its doubtful anger." Drawing her arm within his own, he turned towards the door. Severine was too astounded for words.

His anger now roused beyond all endurance, Curé Cinq Mars warningly stretched out his hand towards Giovanni's retreating figure, and exclaimed aloud: "The day of Monsieur's reckoning with the Church, which he delights in making so light of, shall sooner than he thinks overtake him!"

With a shudder, Severine drew closer to Giovanni.

CHAPTER XVIII

PATAUD'S LAST LEAP

"And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it understanding, but no tongue."

WHEN Severine turned with Giovanni down the corridor of the dear old house that had been her home since childhood, and walked along it in the direction of the broad stairway leading to the hall and main entrance below, busy memory recalled so vividly incidents of girlhood days that tears blinded her eyes. How little she had thought in those days of such a home-leaving—a home-leaving with a father's anger upon her head, and even worse, the dread of having committed some unpardonable offence against the Church.

The long passage before them looked completely deserted, and it seemed to her as though not one kindly word of parting by her aunt, or even the servants, was to make less painful the leaving. Even as the thought was in her mind a rustle of garments was heard, and, turning, she found herself the next moment in her aunt's arms. Proud as Josephine d'Egmont was too of her birth, her love for the motherless young girl was superior to it, and she kissed Severine again and yet again.

Severine could not speak, so deep was her emotion.

From her aunt's lips there came nothing but words of hope and comfort. Knowing nothing of

what had happened in the library, she tried to make the girl's departure less hard to bear by speaking confidently of the time when her brother's hardness should have departed, and she and Giovanni would be home again, and they all would be happy again as before.

Giovanni turned away—it was so hard to listen and see, knowing all he did, without breaking down. The last word he heard Josephine whisper to the girl on her bosom was the soothing belief that the Church would not be grievously incensed at her act in marrying without her father's consent.

When Josephine had gone, the look of dread on Severine's face had partly disappeared.

The good news of Severine's return had by this time reached ancient Delphis Picard, the gardener, and his wife, as well as Baptiste Monette and Katie Kimball; so that when Severine and Giovanni reached the hall below, the quartette was there to receive them. But the sorrow of their countenances, when they saw that Severine was going from them again, made the burden of the home-leaving still heavier for her, and all she could do at this time was to silently clasp the outstretched hands and turn away quickly with Giovanni to the door, where they had left the carriage waiting.

As they emerged from the house into the darkness, Giovanni was surprised to see the carriage was not at the door. He looked around in perplexity; he had distinctly ordered the driver to wait. Leaving Severine on the verandah, he stepped down to the ground. Now he could distinctly see, some fifty feet distant, the gleam of the carriage-lamps. Thinking the driver, for some reason or other, had preferred to wait a little distance from the house, Giovanni would not take the trouble to have him

summoned, but, with Severine on his arm, began to walk towards the carriage. He little imagined that scarcely five minutes ago the figure that had flitted down the corridor—the one whose hand he had seen steal into the room and close the library door—had, after unfastening the chain of the mastiff Pataud, gone straight to the driver and ordered him to wait in the curve of the carriage-way, in the gloomy shadow of a great tree, where Giovanni saw the man was now stationed.

With minds brooding upon the events of the night, Severine and Giovanni walked in silence towards the carriage. No admonition of danger came to either of them. They were almost in the dense shadow of the tree before the faint light from the carriage-lamps revealed them to the driver. The man rose hastily to his feet, but ere he could leap to the ground and open the carriage door, a deep, muffled roar rent the stillness, and immediately following it, from behind the trunk of the tree, there sprang into the light of the lamps an animal of colossal proportions—its great strength, baleful eyes, yawning jaws, and savage aspect making it a beast to be as feared of man as any that roams the wastes. True as an arrow from the bow, the beast had leaped direct for Giovanni's throat. With the intuition so marvellous in woman, Severine seemed to know before her eyes lighted on the animal from what direction it was coming, and that it was Giovanni who was in danger, and she sprang directly in front of him. The beast, at the instant she reached Giovanni, was upon her. But before the monster jaws could close, she had recognised the animal, and faintly called out, as she fell to the ground, "Pataud, Pataud!"

With the ferocity almost of the animal itself,

Giovanni threw himself upon it; but it paid no heed to him, but, whining piteously, licked Severine's hand.

She had suffered no great bodily injury, but the violence of the shock had seriously unnerved her. Partially kneeling, she began to pat the animal, saying, in excited way, "You did not know me, Pataud; you did not know me."

Thrashing its tail to and fro, the beast evinced the greatest joy.

With full heart, Giovanni raised her, and supported her to the carriage. The animal followed, rubbing itself against her as lovingly as a kitten.

When the carriage suddenly rolled away, a mournful howl was heard. It had barely died away when the giant form of Friar Fontaine emerged swiftly from the black background of the tree. He looked at the animal for an instant, and then, with an enraged, terrified cry, sprang upon it, and seizing it by the throat, threw it upon its back. He had seen, as he had looked at the beast, in the fading light of the carriage, a piece of Severine's dress hanging from its ferocious mouth. The sight had thrown his weak mind into a paroxysm of uncontrollable madness. From the place where he had been crouching he had seen the dog light upon Severine. Then he had been as one frozen with horror. She had fallen near the carriage wheels, out of his sight. He had not heard the few words she had spoken to the animal, and now it was in his mind that Giovanni had picked her up sorely mangled, and had driven away with her to try and save her life.

Blinded by rage at what he thought the animal had done, the friar's great fingers sank into its throat with the resistlessness of steel. The beast began to writhe, but failed to release the hold.

"*Chien du diable ! chien du diable !* you bit her—*her !*" he broke out, in savage fury. The eyeballs of the animal began to bulge from their sockets ; its tongue lolled thick and black from its mouth ; foam from its jaws flecked the awful hands, yet it made no attempt to bite. Savage and powerful though it was, it was powerless to break away from the fingers of the giant, which the more surely tightened their hold with every agonised effort of the beast to escape.

The struggle was now in the darkness, for the light from the carriage had died completely away.

"*Chien du diable ! chien du diable !*" he kept on reiterating between his clenched teeth.

The beast beat the air with its feet and dashed its body on the ground ; yet its head might have been in a casement of steel, for all it could move it. The friar's fury increased the longer the contest lasted, until he was completely overpowered with the maniacal lust to kill.

"*Chien du diable ! chien du diable !*"

The rattle from the beast's throat and its dreadful gasping could now be heard far away—its struggles were growing rapidly weaker.

Still the friar cursed it, and still the vice-like fingers took on more and more strength. During the first part of the struggle he had tried several times to pinion the beast with one hand and reach his coat pocket with the other, but, immense though his strength was, he had failed in the feat. But the moment when one hand was sufficient to hold it came finally, and the hand that was disengaged snatched at the pocket and drew something swiftly from it. Then the giant arm swung rapidly into the air, and there followed a heavy dull thud and a great gasp : the writhing of the animal had ceased ; buried

deep in its heart was one of the curiously shaped, highly tempered taxidermist knives used by Monsieur d'Egmont.

"*Chien du diable !*" There was now a wild, triumphant ring in the voice.

Long after the beast had ceased its struggles, he continued to pinion it by the throat, shaking it, and muttering curses upon it. He seemed utterly lost to reason. Finally springing to his feet, in his frenzy, he seized the dead animal with both hands, swung it once in the air, and then cast it far past the big tree, in the hiding of some tangled hedges.

At the crash of its fall, he shook his great fist in the direction of the hedges and cried out hoarsely, "You bit her—*her !—chien du diable !*"

Alone now in the darkness and silence, there came to his diseased imagination a vision of Severine with her throat torn and bleeding by the fangs of the fierce mouth that had been hushed for ever. The vision was maddening beyond endurance, and with a bound he dashed down the carriage-way, turned on to the road, and at his utmost speed ran in the direction the carriage had taken. As he drew near the village he slackened his pace; he knew the carriage must long ago have reached the hotel where she had been driven; and to run into the place and demand to see her would, he knew, even in his mad excitement, be but to court sure failure.

Reaching the hotel by a circuitous route, he tried in his weak way to evolve some plan whereby he might see her. While thus helplessly hovering about in the darkness, he was surprised to see Giovanni leave the hotel and wander distractedly away into the night.

Clutching at his knife, he made a motion as

though he would steal after him ; but the vision of the lacerated throat was more powerful even than hate, and he turned back to once more haunt the hotel. Finally, he wandered stealthily up to the door and opened it. There was no one about. He had often been in the hotel before, and knew every nook and cranny of it. Reaching the first landing, he looked down it to where he knew the principal guest-chamber and parlour were—and which were rarely ever occupied. He saw the parlour door was now partially open and that a light gleamed from it. He caught his breath : he knew she must be there—perhaps the doctors even now were attending her, and Giovanni had not been able to stop and watch them at their work !

The light from the door fascinated him, as it would a moth. He hovered about the landing, drifting nearer every moment to the enticing place. At last the light was suddenly blotted out—his great figure was on the threshold of the parlour door. He raised his hand a dozen times to knock, but had not the courage. His irresolution became positive agony. The hidden torment of a lifetime made it impossible for him to flee from the place and retrace his steps. He heard no sound in the room—perhaps it was because she was unconscious ! Clammy sweat broke out on his seamed forehead ; anything would have been easier to have borne than the ominous silence in the room. Suddenly, a cry shook him from head to foot. It came from the room. It was her voice, full, full of suffering ! Discretion was now all gone : pushing the door noiselessly open, he stepped unnoticed into the room. What he saw added to his foolish fears. At the far end of the room, crouched in front of a chair, was Severine, her position and whole demeanour exhibiting the most keen distress.

Her arms, which were stretched across the chair, pillowed her pained face.

Unaware of the intrusion, a low moan broke from her lips.

He never doubted but that the dog had hurt her, and with a remorseful exclamation bounded into the room.

At the sound of his voice she sprang to her feet, and turned towards the door in amazement and terror.

He had been so sure she had been sorely hurt that he could but stand, as he saw her rise, and gaze at her in surprise as great as her own. Seeing she was waiting for him to speak, he pressed his hands tightly to his afflicted forehead, and said, in dazed, heart-broken way, "Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle Severine."

She got the impression, he had come to tell her how sorry he and the other servants were that she had had to leave her home, and, although in an intensely nervous mood herself, she said pityingly, "Don't mind, Jean; after a time I may come back again."

The pity in her voice and the suffering in her white face was all that was necessary to make him completely forget himself and bring on the catastrophe he had dreaded for years. Sinking on his knees and stretching out his hands towards her, he broke out wildly, "Oh, Mademoiselle, I was so afraid. I thought it might have killed you. But your throat is still white and not hurt. I thank the Blessed Virgin! You did not know, Mademoiselle, but I heard it all in the library while they talked. I heard the priest say that he who stole you away from us had done a terrible thing to you. I said he should die. My heart has been on fire not to let him live

since the first day he came to you—when you were so quiet and happy. I used to sit for hours and watch you, Mademoiselle, when you never knew. He came, and it was all changed. His face was a curse to me. He stole you—yes, yes, he stole you, and so I said he should die—die, Mademoiselle—die !”

In the fury in which he had worked himself, he sprang to his feet, drew the blood-stained knife which had brought such swift death to the dog, and stood as rigid as a marble statue, the veins of the great hand grasping the weapon standing out like knotted cords. He was a veritable picture of mad fury and direful purpose.

At the sight of the clotted knife, a horror too deep for expression came over Severine. With wide open eyes, she began to move slowly backward, imagining it was Giovanni's blood that stained the murderous blade.

The horror and intensified suffering of her countenance caused the friar's furious mood to change with the suddenness so peculiar to the mentally weak, and, sinking on his knees, he again held out his hands, in an agony of entreaty, and went on incoherently: “Come, Mademoiselle, come back again, oh, come back ! The days seem never to end now, and the nights are terrible, terrible ! I want to see you every day, as I used to do. When you are back, sleep will come again to me, and the days will not seem as though they would never end. I cry for you, Mademoiselle, to come back ; it must be—I shall die if you do not ; I shall go mad.” The great outstretched hands were shaking now as weakly as would a child's.

Her benumbing terror had only deepened, and as he ceased she again began to move backward.

In his grief he was more mad than in his rage, and he began, in choked voice, to recount many little acts he had seen her perform in the house and in the garden, when she never knew anyone was watching her, and to remind her of how happy her father, he, and they all had been then. Acts of kindness that years ago she had shown him, and which she had forgotten, were now dwelt upon by him with such pathos and abandon, that had it not all been so tragic she must have felt pity for him.

Completely beside himself with his pleading, he drew from a hiding-place in his coat a photograph, looked down at it for a time with passionate love in his face, and then wildly pressed his lips to the beautiful pictured one's again, and yet again, saying under his breath, but loud enough for his words to reach her, "My love—oh, my love!"

(The picture was the identical one he had kissed, in his hopeless, mad grief, the afternoon he had seen Giovanni press his lips to Severine's in the garden at Ste. Anne de Beaupré!)

Looking suddenly up from the photograph, he again began to plead with her to return home. In his great earnestness, he stretched out his hands, forgetting that in one of them was the picture he had just so wildly kissed. The pictured face was turned towards her.

One glance was sufficient—Mother of Heaven, the pictured face was her own! Giovanni murdered! Loved by a madman, whose knife even now reeked with her husband's blood! The retribution of an offended Church had indeed fallen upon her! A blackness filled the room; she wildly stretched out her hands, and fell to the floor in a swoon.

His remorse was dreadful. Running to where

she lay, he called her name, touched her hand, and anon tore madly at his hair. She gave no heed, and her waxen face made him sure that death had indeed claimed her. He promised her a thousand things if she would but speak: never again would he watch her; it was not true that the nights were terrible; the days were not long; he would never make her unhappy again.

But still no flush came to the pale cheeks to give him hope.

Then again drawing forth the photograph, he whimperingly promised her to tear it up, although it was dearer than life to him.

But the face was as quiet and white as before.

Then, in his contrition and agony, he promised the hardest thing of all. Raising his hands, he called Heaven to witness his oath, that from that moment he would never again attempt to injure Giovanni Correggio, and she might go away for ever with him she loved. Surely, surely, she would now show signs of returning life.

Slowly stretching out his palsied hand, he touched her face—it was cold as the face of the dead. Terror now overmastered grief, and he fled wildly from the room, out of the hotel, and into the dark silent night.

When about two hundred yards from the hotel, he stopped abruptly in his mad flight—approaching he heard the distinct sound of footsteps. Soon there loomed up in the darkness the hazy outlines of a man.

He crouched low till the intruder should pass.

When the figure was in line with him, the friar looked up, and immediately recognised the passer-by—it was Giovanni!

Once more the unreasoning jealousy and thirst

for revenge mastered the friar. Possessing himself of the bloody knife, he crept after the retreating figure with the stealthiness of a tiger.

Distracted, and brooding over the position of her who was no longer his wife, Giovanni, all unconscious that he was walking in the very shadow of death, moved slowly on towards the hotel.

When the great creeping figure was near enough to strike, the mighty arm swiftly cut the air; but this time the thirsty blade did not fall. Vividly there came back to him the oath he had just taken over her dead body, that he would never again attempt to injure this man. His arm fell listlessly to his side.

Giovanni had heard nothing, and continued to walk on. The friar watched his figure till it could be seen no longer, and then turned his heavy steps in the opposite direction. A dull, hopeless misery now possessed the friar. He felt that he could not yet return home; he would smother in his room. He believed her to be dead, and did not care what now happened him. Turning from the road, he struck off into the open country.

It was almost daylight when, muttering and confused, he finally staggered to his room.

CHAPTER XIX

A DIREFUL SABBATH

"With wild surprise,
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,
An awful moment motionless she stood."

"Come, madness! come unto me, senseless death!
I cannot suffer this!"

"Let this pernicious hour
Stand aye accursed in the calendar!"

THE Sabbath succeeding the eventful Saturday night had dawned, and in the haze of the early morning, for it was not yet four o'clock, was to be seen, in the sleepy little village of Longueuil, a sight peculiarly characteristic of all French Canadian villages: gliding through the quiet streets, clad in homespun garments, were silent, flitting figures, wending their way to early mass. At intervals the stillness of the village was disturbed by the muffled rumbling of the springless jolting calaches as they rolled through the uneven streets, from the farms miles away, burdened with the husbandman, his wife, and numerous progeny. The destination of the primitive-looking vehicles was the same as that of the gliding pedestrians—the village church. At ten o'clock would be grand mass, when the edifice would be crowded with villagers; but these early morning worshippers knew there was not the merit of self-denial in worshipping at such a time

as there was when the grey, comfortless morn was striving for mastery with the night.

The vigilant church bell, early though the hour was, at intervals softly proclaimed the approach of the first religious service of the day. The villagers whose slumber it chanced to disturb crossed themselves and muttered an Ave. But as the morning wore on apace, and the time for grand mass drew near, the voice of the bell burst out loud and vociferous, and then the whole village bestirred itself, for there were none who did not know what its imperious summons meant.

On this particular Sabbath morning the villagers hurried with unusual haste to attend grand mass. There had gone like wildfire through the village the news that, the evening previous, Severine d'Egmont and he she had eloped with had returned, and they were filled with curiosity to know whether or not they would attend church. They were also curious to know if Monsieur d'Egmont and his sister Josephine would be present. The rumours they had heard that there was something strange about the elopement, coupled with the fact that the young couple were staying at the village hotel, instead of at the manor-house, resulted in the church being crowded as it had not been for many months.

At ten o'clock, the hour for the commencement of the mass, the two pews belonging to Monsieur d'Egmont were still unoccupied, and expectant faces were being turned to the door—was it possible that they were to be disappointed, and that none of the d'Egmonts were to be present?

Some measure of relief was experienced when Monsieur d'Egmont, accompanied by his sister Josephine, was seen to enter the church and occupy

one of the vacant pews. Attention was now more riveted on the door than ever before.

The prelude preparatory to the commencement of the service was nearly finished, but still there was no sign of Monsieur d'Egmont's daughter.

But listen !

In the silence which ensued after the voluntary there was distinctly heard the rumble of an approaching carriage. When the sound of the wheels suddenly ceased, the interest of the watchers was still more intense; the carriage had evidently stopped at the church door.

Chanting voices announced the commencement of the mass; the congregation arose; but more faces were turned to the door than to the altar. The strained expectancy was finally rewarded: the doors were seen to part, and advancing into the church was seen Severine d'Egmont, and at her side a young man of dark, handsome countenance.

Looking neither to the right nor the left, but with eyes fixed on the floor, Severine walked up the aisle. Her face was as pale as the features of the marble statue of Our Lady over the altar. Her drooping lids hid eyes that were dilated to an unnatural extent. Hundreds of eyes greedily sought her face as she advanced into the church. Reaching the vacant pew behind her father, she entered it, and sank upon her knees. The congregation was just kneeling in prayer as she did so.

Giovanni knelt by her side during the long devotional exercise which followed, not praying, but anxiously watching her ashen lips as they moved in agonised pleading; the events of the past night and day had grievously preyed upon her.

Into Giovanni's mind now wandered the incidents attending his return to the hotel the previous night

—just at the moment when Severine seemed recovering from what must have been a most serious swoon. She had been so sure he had been murdered that when she had seen him enter the room, and with an alarmed cry run towards her, the shock had been so severe she had fallen again into unconsciousness. He had been like one demented as he strove to win her back to memory. He blamed himself, unnumbered times, for having left her in the hotel alone while he had gone, in his misery, to walk in the darkness, trying to compose himself so that she might not surmise from his manner that aught else oppressed his mind beside the refusal of her father to be reconciled to her.

Before leaving the hotel, he had realised that, from the peculiar position he had been placed in towards her, he should treat her as a sister until the Catholic Church consented to make them both legally one. When his efforts had succeeded, and she again recovered consciousness, her condition had been such as to still more deeply increase his concern.

As for Severine, when she had been able to speak, she had felt that she could not, just then, reveal to him Friar Fontaine's mad confession of love; hence it was, even now, in the church, he was still under the impression that her illness had been entirely brought about by *Curé Cinq Mars'* threatening attitude towards her, by her father's refusal to forgive, and by the shock from her encounter with the mastiff.

But of all the ordeals she had gone through, none was preying on her mind this morning as did her estrangement from the Church. During the long hours of the previous night she had been too unstrung and nervous to retire, and now every nerve was stretched to its utmost tension. Little wonder,

as he now knelt by her side and cast anxious glances at the tense, wistful face, that the bare thought of a rumour reaching her as to their true position made him shudder with fear. Before they had left the hotel to come to church, he had pleaded hard with her, for her health's sake, to forego the service; but he had been powerless to change her determination to come.

It was a relief to him when prayers were over and he saw her rise from her cramped position. When she seated herself, he saw that all her agony and wrestling in prayer had failed to bring peace to her tender, pathetic face.

Looking towards the altar, Giovanni saw in front of it Curé Cinq Mars, his thin figure gorgeously robed. As the priest raised his hands, knelt, and anon ascended and descended the short stairs leading to the altar, where was hidden the host, his every motion was followed with such troubled interest by Severine as to attract the curiosity and attention of those near her. Thus the service continued, and the time for the sermon at last arrived.

Almost blocking one of the aisles, a short distance from where Severine was sitting, was the pulpit, with its narrow winding stairs. As Curé Cinq Mars' slender, agile figure left the altar and glided with measured steps towards the pulpit, and presently was seen appearing and disappearing around the tortuous steps leading up to it, something more than the usual hush preceding the sermon fell upon the congregation. Why this should have been perhaps none could have exactly told; but on account of the well-known outspoken manner of the country priests when in the pulpits, in fearlessly admonishing, commanding, and even publicly excommunicating, it was customary for the faithful at any service—apart from

the flutter of excitement attached to this—to listen with interest.

As Giovanni looked up at the pulpit and now saw the disliked face of the priest as it bent over the Bible, he noted with uneasiness that it wore the same hard, uncompromising expression as on the memorable previous night, in the library of Monsieur d'Egmont's house.

Raising his eyes from the Scriptures, Curé Cinq Mars looked in silence for a few moments over the audience. In the subdued light his thin profile stood out sharp and resolute. When he slowly announced his text, there was not a crevice where his metallic, penetrating voice did not reach. The words he had chosen to speak upon were: "But of all the virtues there is none to equal that of obedience."

"Obedience!"

As Giovanni repeated the word under his breath, he was thinking again of Monsieur d'Egmont's library, its central figure the priest who was now in the pulpit above him. Ringing in his ears, too, were Curé Cinq Mars' strangely threatening words, uttered as he had turned from the library with Severine.

When Curé Cinq Mars, however, began his opening remarks upon his text, the dread that had been creeping over Giovanni died away. Instead of hearing any hints thrown out of the secret that had been revealed the night before, the priest was but speaking upon the simple theme of the early founding of the Catholic Church.

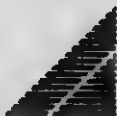
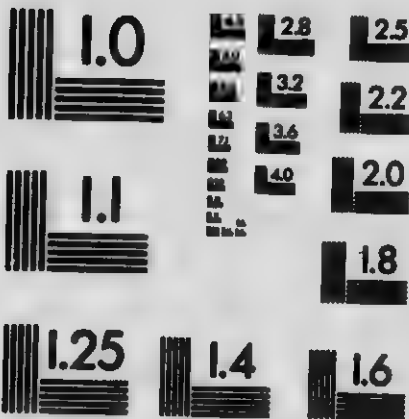
Relieved, Giovanni looked up again at the stern face to see if he could get any clue from it as to what might possibly be forthcoming, but the countenance might have been a mask for all it disclosed.

But of all too short duration was the relief so



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welcomed by Giovanni; for soon the priest branched abruptly from the history of the infancy of the Church, and took up the great theme of obedience, dwelling upon the names of saints who, in the early days of the Church, had been singled out as worthy of veneration for all time because of striking acts of devotion—but especially of obedience. Branching out, with fiery eloquence, upon the great doctrine of obedience, the preacher showed that of all the virtues it was the most blessed, always bringing sure peace and happiness to the Church's followers who were the most devoted to it.

But, on the other hand, what did the Church's history show had ever befallen those who had thought lightly of this great doctrine, and cavilled at the Church's right to demand unquestioning obedience? What, too, had been the portion of those who, while outwardly bowing before the Church's divine right to command, obeyed the priests only when their mandates pleased or chanced not to clash with some preconceived idea about personal liberty? He could reply that in all ages it had been shown that the portion of the disobedient, presumptuous, and headstrong had ever been woe and misery. And yet, despite every warning and example in the past, there were many, even to-day, in the great province of Quebec—a province peculiarly favoured of the Virgin—who were constantly rebelling against the Church. Such conduct must no longer be tolerated: rob the Church of her apostolic right to command, and she was the rudderless ship at sea, buffeted hither and thither, a source of peril, instead of safety, to the souls who trusted her to bring them safely into the harbour of everlasting life.

Thus he continued to speak, now quoting the rich

promises to those whose faith in the Church was all-sufficient to guide them in every circumstance in life, and anon citing the sorrows predicted for all who by their disobedience brought the glory and dignity of the Church into disrepute.

Suddenly closing the Bible, he drew his figure up, and with brows knitted over his small piercing eyes, stood for several moments looking over the audience.

The expectancy on the eager faces deepened.

"In these days," he went on, in low, warning voice, "when the *mandements* of the bishops are being ignored and the dictates of the priests set at naught, sermons such as I this morning have preached are needed not in this parish alone but in the whole country. What I chiefly mean, I know, is yet fresh in all your memories and consciences. In this particular parish, however, there is a peculiar call for my sermon this morning. There are among us those who recently have not only disobeyed the Church but offered open defiance to its priests."

The meaning manner of the speaker was even more ominous than his words, and a feeling of suffocation came over Giovanni.

And Severine! As she sat in her unstrung state and heard extolled the blessedness of those who had been obedient to the Church, and had listened to the sorrows predicted for those who were disobedient to it, conscience lashed her with scorpion tongues. But unhappy as she was on account of her disobedience to parental commands, and of disobedience—unintentional though it was—to the Church, there was not on her mind the terrible dread, now weighing down Giovanni's, of something dreadful concerning themselves falling from the priest's lips.

"It may be," Curé Cinq Mars was saying, "that those who have brought this new indignity upon the

Church were ignorant at the time of their disobedience of the depths of suffering it would entail, and ignorant especially of the power of the Church, in their case, to resent such disobedience. As a priest of the Church, I should be very remiss in my duty this morning did I not try to safeguard others—who may be tempted to act as they have acted—by proclaiming, as you are wont to hear from the pulpits, condemnation of error and wrong, fearless as to whether those who have erred are of high or low station in life."

On Giovanni's haggard face was now a look of fearful interest.

To Monsieur d'Egmont the drift of the whole sermon was now made apparent, and he leaned rigidly against the high-backed pew, his face pallid, and his breath coming rapidly.

There was not a rustle of a garment in the whole edifice.

Quoting, as he had done the night before in Monsieur d'Egmont's library, the rights and privileges of the Catholic Church, as they had existed under the French régime, Curé Cinq Mars proclaimed to his listeners how every privilege had been perpetuated to the Church by England. It was his duty to explain that among the privileges and rights guaranteed the Church was one but little known—but of far-reaching importance—relating to the marriage law, and it was necessary for the dignity and glory of the Church that the power it really possessed in the land, in regard to marriage, should be misunderstood no longer, but known the country over.

Exactly as he had proven in Giovanni's hearing, he now, before the crowded church, showed the powerlessness of the civil law—or of any Church but the Catholic Church—to solemnise a marriage

between two Roman Catholics. It was his duty to say, that in spite of the clearness of this law, it had been ignored by Mademoiselle Severine d'Egmont of the parish of Longueuil, and by Monsieur Giovanni Correggio of the parish of Montreal, who had fled to a Protestant minister to unite them in marriage after he, on account of their not having had parental consent, had refused to conduct the ceremony. The marriage that had been performed between them had no value either in civil or in ecclesiastical law. And yet, in spite of this fact, they had lived, and were still living together, as man and wife—such was the result of disobedience, such the result of puny rebellious pride against their Holy Church.

Casting aside the cold restraint which he had so far kept upon himself, Curé Cinq Mars now imperiously stretched out his hand and in his piercing voice cried, sternly: "Having defied the Church and the law, and brought contempt upon both, by living in a manner contrary to their mandates, I hereby proclaim Giovanni Correggio and Severine d'Egmont deprived of the sacraments of the Church, until such time as the Archbishop of the diocese consents to the Catholic Church performing the marriage service between them and making legal their union."

As he turned and descended the steps of the pulpit the congregation remained motionless, as though he were still speaking. Truly, truly, had Curé Cinq Mars fulfilled the ominous words he had spoken the previous night in the library, when Giovanni had indignantly turned from his presence with Severine!

A cry of agony broke the spellbound silence, and all eyes were turned towards Severine, who was following with horror-stricken eyes the retreating

figure of the indomitable priest. In her attitude there was something of that pitiful vacancy one sees in the face of the deranged. Giovanni mutely watched her. His own face was drawn, and piteous to behold.

Awed and unrestful by the scene they had witnessed, the worshippers, with ill-concealed haste, turned their steps to the door. To be deprived of the holy sacraments! The heavy air of the church seemed to be stifling them, and they thirsted for the reassuring sunlight again.

Those who passed where Severine sat, stricken and shamed, averted their eyes, and breathed more freely when her pew was behind them. Banned by the Church! Who knew what evil influence might not surround those upon whom rested the Church's awful displeasure? And so they hurried out, the vacant pews momentarily growing more numerous.

The church was almost empty when Monsieur d'Egmont rose to go. It was noted that his head was as erect as usual and his step apparently as firm; but appearances, as they so often are, were deceitful, and he, and he alone, knew the effort it cost at this calamitous hour to still appear proud and unmoved. Josephine, his sister, had not his strength, and he had to give her his arm as they left the pew.

As they were passing the pew where Severine and Giovanni still sat, he gave no sign that he saw them. Severine, in an agony of supplication, bent suddenly towards him and uttered his name.

Josephine hesitated and looked pleadingly up at her brother; but his only answer to her unspoken entreaty was to politely give her a firmer support of his arm, and to pass on as though he had not heard.

Severine called his name a second time, and now louder; but he did not turn.

On, down the aisle, and finally out through the door he passed, answering the constrained salutations of the *habitants* with his usual dignified courtesy, his soul all the time fainting under its heavy cross of humiliation.

The edifice was completely empty when Giovanni, in dry voice, told Severine they must go. He might have been defiant, even yet, had she not been so ill and woefully broken.

At the sound of his voice she started to her feet as though to leave the church with him; but her dazed look suddenly changed to one of fear, and drawing back, she said fearfully, "No, no, Giovanni, I cannot go with you now; you forget that we—that I—I"—She sank back on her seat again.

He sat down by her side, his heart breaking, yet with tender, loving words seeking to win her back to composure. Many minutes elapsed before he succeeded in somewhat relieving the tension so unnerving her, and she rose to leave the silent church with him.

Outside the church, near the carriage, which was still waiting near the door, loitered small groups of villagers, pity and curiosity swaying them.

As the door of the edifice opened and the ghostly face of Severine was disclosed, a few walked away, as though they had been waiting for nothing particular. Among those who remained were Madame Picard, the housekeeper, and old Delphis her husband. Standing near them was awkward Baptiste and valiant Katie Kimball. Alone, very near the church, was Friar Fontaine, his burning eyes fixed on the lovely suffering face of her his mad heart so wildly loved.

As Severine was descending the steps of the

church she raised her eyes towards a small group of villagers, and they turned their heads. On the faces she had read dread, pity—and oh, dear Virgin—shame. She stood on the steps looking after the shrinking group, her face strained, her eyes bright and dry.

Giovanni whispered her name, and, as she again moved mechanically forward, her eyes fell upon Madame Picard and Delphis.

The suffering they saw in her dear face drew them faltering in her wake, despite their superstitious dread of those against whom the Church raised its hand. It is doubtful, though, with all their longing to speak to her, if they would have had the courage to do so, had not Katie Kimball sped forward as Severine was entering the carriage and with outstretched hands called her name. There was something very wild in Severine's manner as she quickly turned and, without speaking, took Katie's hands, and then Baptiste's, and finally touched the wavering finger-tips of faltering, awed Delphis and Madame Picard. As Delphis looked into her feverish eyes, he muttered, "What I said has come true: evil and sorrow has indeed fallen on the house of the d'Egmonts, and the end is not even yet."

Just as the carriage was about to start forward and bear Severine and Giovanni away, an ungainly giant-like figure roughly forced its way through the sorrowing little group, and stretching out its great arms, called dementedly, "I thank the good, good Virgin that you are not dead, Mademoiselle. I thought it was your spirit entering the church. Now that you live, for the sake of the Virgin, do not go away again; I cannot bear it!"—it was Friar Fontaine, the very picture of madness and despair.

Severine did not turn.

With mystified face, Giovanni made a motion to the driver, and the carriage rolled away.

The distraught creature hesitated for a few moments, fighting against the impulse to follow the carriage, and then, quickly turning, ran in the direction of the thick woods just behind the church.

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CHAPTER XX

OBLIVION

"Every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense;
And each frail fibre of her brain
(As bow strings when relaxed by rain,
The erring arrow launch aside)
Sent forth her words all wild and wide."

Two weeks have elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter. It is the midnight of another Sabbath.

In the favoured church of Bonne Ste. Anne the lights in front of the altar, which are never allowed to die out the long year through, cast a dim glow around in the quiet of the solemn hour. They are so arranged that they light up very clearly the great statue of Bonne Ste. Anne near by. The base of the pedestal is thickly festooned with crutches, bandages, eyeglasses, and many other offerings left by the afflicted as a tribute to the power of Bonne Ste. Anne to cure.

As is the peculiar custom throughout the province the doors of the edifice, late though the hour is, are unfastened (they will be so all night), so that the troubled of heart may never miss, night or day, the consolations of worship in their churches.

The stillness within is oppressive; but it is presently broken by the clock in the tower tolling the hour of midnight. Long after it has ceased striking, its voice can be heard vibrating huskily about

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FAMOUS STATUE OF STE. ANNE.

the high altar. The ghostly sounds grow gradually more indistinct, and finally fade away altogether.

Scarcely, however, does silence resume its domain again, than the dismal creaking of one of the doors is heard, and there may be seen creeping out of the distant gloom towards the altar the shadowy figure of a woman. As she draws near the altar, her face is disclosed. It is exceedingly beautiful, but full of unutterable pathos and heart-breaking woe. The glorious hair which crowns her head has become deranged and is streaming over her shoulders and bosom, revealing their beautiful soft outlines as through a silken sheen. Her whole appearance is greatly distraught. The brilliancy of her eyes is disquieting. Her gaze is fixed unwaveringly on the statue, and her agitation increases the nearer she draws to it. Reaching the pedestal at last, she casts herself down on her knees before it, and with head thrown far back and hands raised in agony of appeal, cries wildly out, "Save me, Good Ste. Anne! Save me, Mother of Mary!" With increasing wildness and untiring reiteration, she continues to supplicate the saint whose fame to succour the afflicted and distressed was so great.

No answer coming to the distracted pleader, she sprang suddenly to her feet, thrust aside the clustering crutches from the chilly column, and clasping her hands around it, began incoherently to confess her many transgressions—transgressions which her diseased mind made tower to heaven itself. Her piteous outpourings were frequently interspersed with tender wandering words about Giovanni, whom she ever sought to screen.

She had been telling of her meeting with Giovanni, of how dear he was to her, when she chanced to make some reference to their marriage, and then,

flashing back to her wandering memory, came the recollection of the unutterable woe of the service two Sabbaths ago. Sinking to her knees with a low, terrified scream, she clasped her hands to her ears—as though to shut out some terrible anathema—and cried, "Good Ste. Anne, have mercy! Tell me it is not true, and that I am not an outcast from the Church. Tell me the priest did not mean those terrible words, and that I am forgiven and as one of thy children."

Crouching at the foot of the column, she rocked herself violently to and fro, pouring forth any prayer that chanced to come to her lips. As she swayed her shoulder happened to come in contact with a crutch suspended from the column; the concussion forced it upwards and from its fastenings, and it dashed to the floor at her feet with a crash that thundered discordantly through the church. Terrified, she started to her feet with a wild exclamation. Her cry, mingling with the other noises, instantly came echoing back to her from every nook and corner of the edifice, intensifying her uncomprehending terror. With eyes blazing with madness, she stood, as would a fear-stricken animal, listening and casting fearful and furtive glances about. Then she began backing slowly in the direction of the altar. When within a few feet of it, she turned quickly, as though to dart through a side door near by. But her eyes encountered a huge painting—which had been in the edifice many years. It depicted with startling vividness the awful torments of the lost in purgatory, their pictured faces exhibiting unutterable agony as the long tongues of yellow flame licked their naked bodies. To the devout sane the picture was often a trying one; to Severine's mad eyes it was the realism of hell itself.

In fascinated terror, she stood motionless, her small white fingers clutching her hair, and watched the scorched bodies as in excruciating agony they seemed to writhe in the sea of devouring flame.

Standing among the host of sufferers in the painting was seen, more vividly than the others, a very beautiful girl, her awful eyes painted so as to follow the beholder. Even in her unspeakable agony, the sufferer was shown as striving to hold aloft from the devouring element, which had enveloped her to her shoulders, the wealth of hair she must once have so much treasured. In vain were all Severine's efforts to flee from the imploring fascinating eyes, and soon, despite her horror and her wish to flee, she began to move towards the picture—the impulse to snatch the lost being from the flames mastering her more and more the nearer she drew towards it. Such were the illusions of dethroned reason, that soon she imagined the undying flames were beginning to scorch her own face, and she held out her hands to screen it from them. Still the eyes drew her on. When very near the glowing pictured purgatory, her laggard pace was quickened, and she darted forward—as would a fascinated bird to the yawning mouth of a cobra—both hands stretched far out to pluck the sufferer from the seething hell.

The picture was high above her head, and she scarcely touched the frame, yet had she plunged her hands into veritable flames she could not have been more acutely conscious of their scorching power; with a cry of pain and fear, she turned and fled from the picture, holding her hands to her bosom as though in physical agony. Reaching the statue, she fell prostrate before it, and with insane cries called Ste. Anne to save her from the torments of the lost.

When her terror had somewhat subsided, her mood changed again, and she began to babble as though Giovanni were by her side, telling him one moment in soothing tones, and the next with great violence that Good Ste. Anne would not refuse to perform a miracle for them. It was on her mind, somehow, that Giovanni doubted her words, and so, anxiously stretching out her hands to the saint, she began to beseech her to instantly demonstrate her mighty power and remove that very moment the causes of their unhappiness.

But, to her infinite distress, the queenly figure on the pedestal did not float down, as she so fondly longed, and speak peace to her worn mind and give rest to her fainting body.

In her disappointment, she had begun to grow wild and incoherent again, when the door of the church, in the gloomy distance, was drawn back again, and Giovanni, his dark, handsome face all haggard and worn, strode over the threshold and stood listening. Suddenly with an exclamation of relief, he sped quickly down the aisle in the direction of the statue, where the loved voice was so wildly pleading. In his hand was his violin-case.

With that marvellous activity of mind which moments of intense excitement so frequently bring, there came back to him, almost in the twinkling of an eye, all the events of the two weeks that had passed since the sermon in the church at Longueuil. He saw himself once more by her side in the church, listening to the metallic voice of Curé Cinq Mars as it rose in denunciation; saw himself by her side as they drove from the church, the awed looks of the groups who had lingered at the doors following them; saw himself in the lonely little hotel, in the ensuing days, striving with the physicians to soothe

away the excitement which she had no power to control, and bring forgetfulness of the tragic events which had followed each other so quickly, and which were rapidly and remorselessly unbalancing her mind; saw himself, finally, giving way to her ceaseless importunity to be taken to the statue of Good Ste. Anne, where she was so sure Ste. Anne would pardon all her sins against the Church. The physicians had diagnosed her case as a severe attack of religious monomania, brought on by successive shocks, and aggravated by the want of sleep.

He had arrived with her from Longueuil but a few hours ago. He had seen her sink on her bed in the cottage to which he had brought her, with a sigh, as though blessed sleep, so long a stranger, was about to come to her at last. He had been so sure she would sleep that he had left the room. But when he returned to it an hour later, it was empty. He had sought her in the houses in the village she had been in the habit of visiting before he had entered into her life and the dark days had come, but could find no trace of her. Then a sickening fear had possessed him, and he had run to the river-side and wildly sought her along its precipitous banks.

The thought of the church had at last come to him as an inspiration, and now he heard her voice near the statue, and in another moment would clasp her in his arms.

She did not know, in her madness, that he was near her till he suddenly caught her to his bosom. The unexpected clasp of his arms startled and threw her into a still wilder frenzy. Without looking to see who held her, she threw her arms around the pedestal and cried to the saint to save her from

being dragged away by the Evil One. When finally he succeeded in making her recognise him, the Evil One then possessed her that it was not herself but he, the Evil One desired to drag to the flames, and frantically drawing him to his knees by her shoulders she shrinkingly pointed towards the painted Good Ste. Anne to quench the flames so that the Evil One might not harm him. She would also pray the saint to turn the anger of the Church away from them.

Yielding to her mood, he brokenly whispered back that the Church was not angry with either of them, and that the flames, at the command of Good Ste. Anne, were already beginning to die away. In such manner he pacified her somewhat; but when he proposed that they should leave the church, and come back on the morrow, when Good Ste. Anne herself should marry them, she imagined he was counselling her against the wishes of the saint, and so again clasping the pedestal, she called incoherently to the statue. The moment he attempted to unclasp her arms her frenzy grew so serious that he saw he must not use the slightest force with her, and that she could only be removed after she had been soothed.

Taking up his violin-case, he crept into a dark corner of the church. He had taken the instrument with him when he had set out to search for her, expecting he might need it. During the past two weeks he had soothed her paroxysms of frenzy with its music when every other means had failed. Standing in the shadow of one of the pillars, he softly drew the instrument from its case. His fingers trembled on the bow so that he could scarcely hold it—the circumstances under which

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he was now about to play to her were so weird and piteous.

She had evidently forgotten that he had ever been with her, and was continuing her wild supplications. There had just fallen from her lips a burst of frenzy more heartrending than before, when there came softly vibrating through the church an entrancing, soothing melody. Instantly her cries ceased, and pressing her hands to her bosom, she stood with enraptured face looking upward, sure she was listening to the music of heaven—sent by Good Ste. Anne as a sign that her supplications were at last heard, and that the miracle for which she so longed was about to be performed. Her strained eyes were fastened on the statue, which she momentarily expected to see float down towards her and speak words of forgiveness for her error against the Church.

As the rhythmic sounds continued, and finally wove themselves into an air of entrancing beauty, the dominating thought of the miracle began to die away from her. In the peace-speaking refrain there was that which was awakening in her breast impressions of past happiness and peace. Presently she crouched down by the side of the pedestal, and pillowing her wistful face on her hand, drank thirstily in the music which was bringing such calm and rest. No other air could have affected her as the one he had chosen did: it was the melody he had played on the memorable Christmas Eve, from *Nasarenus*, when he had first seen her, and which had preceded the dramatic depicting of the crucifixion.

Such was the powerful personality the player threw into the melody, that before it was quite finished she slowly rose, and, stretching out her

hands towards the distant gloom, called out wildly, "Giovanni—Giovanni!"

The picture of pathos and sadness she made as she stood there calling his name, with the shadow of the statue falling athwart her face, in the background the gorgeous altar, never left him. He sprang towards her, all his great love for her glowing in his eloquent face. As he took her in his arms her head drooped on his shoulder, and she began to wanderingly talk of how beautiful music was, how tired she felt, and how she wanted to go home and rest.

Encircling her with his arm, he drew her slowly away from the statue, up the aisle, towards the door, talking brightly to her all the while, lest she might drift back again into the furious mood from which the influence of music had won her.

When quite near the door, he remembered she was without wraps of any kind, and that the night was damp and chilly. He feared to expose her to the cold in her delicate state of health. The presbytery being very close to the church, he decided to leave her till he ran there and secured wraps. Seating her in a sombre pew, he told her to wait for him till he returned, impressing upon her that he would only be gone a few minutes. She looked at him with troubled eyes, but made no reply.

As he was leaving the church, he turned and looked back, a strange reluctance to leaving her coming over him. Chiding himself for his folly, he turned quickly away, and the next instant the closing doors hid her from his eyes—hid her in a way he would have given the universe to have prevented.

Scarcely had he descended the steps of the church

and started on his journey to the presbytery, than a darkly-clad figure glided from behind a distant pillar in the church, flitted to the door, and looked out after Giovanni—whose form had already grown faint in the darkness. Re-entering the church, the figure moved swiftly to where Severine was sitting. She was talking wandringly again. Stopping at the pew where she sat, the figure laid its hand upon her arm, and said with gentle persuasiveness, "Come, we will go now."

She went on rambling as though she had not been spoken to.

Wasting no further words, the figure bent over the pew and drew her gently to her feet.

The idea must have been with her that it was Giovanni, for she offered no resistance, and allowed the figure to lead her from the pew in the direction of a side door which opened on the main road. On the figure's face began to glow a look of triumph.

They were almost at the door when Severine's eyes happened to light on the statue of Ste. Anne again, and she sprang away from her guide towards it. Her action had been so wholly unexpected that she was quite a distance away before the figure overtook her and resolutely threw its arms about her.

The instant she felt the detaining grasp her docile mood disappeared, and she began to struggle violently, her voice becoming furiously loud.

For a time her captor tried to pacify her, casting apprehensive looks all the while in the direction of the main doors by which Giovanni had left. Every effort failing to calm her, her detainer, with quick determination, caught her up bodily from the floor, pressing her mouth to his shoulder so as to smother her cries. In this condition he bore her from the

church, by the side door, and a little distance down the road, where a carriage was hid in the darkness.

Such was the bitterness of fate, that Giovanni re-entered the church almost at the moment the door had closed behind the two.

Amazed at not finding her in the pew where he had left her, Giovanni, with forebodings of ill, ran towards the statue to see if she were crouching at its base again; but too true had been his apprehensions—neither was there any trace of her dead figure there.

As he turned to search for her in the gloomier parts of the edifice, there came the distinct rumble of carriage wheels and the quick beat of horses' hoofs.

The sound of the wheels in the quiet village at such an hour, coupled with the furious speed with which the horses were being driven, made Giovanni suddenly stop in his search, a new and stupefying fear seizing him. As he fought to collect his thoughts, there came, mingling with the roll of the wheels and the beating of hoofs, a sound which roused him to instantaneous action—something like the scream of a woman's voice. It was very faint, and he might have been mistaken, but like one possessed he darted along the aisles, bounded over obstructing pews, till he reached the side door. Gaining the street, he ran stumbling in the direction the carriage had taken. The pursuit was utterly hopeless; the treacherous darkness bewildered and misled him. Every moment the sound of the wheels was fading in distinctness, until soon he could hear it no more. Still he continued to run wildly on. When he finally halted, far on the outskirts of the village, the only sound breaking the stillness was his laboured breathing.

In his bewilderment and sorrow, he wandered down a path unknown to him, and which led to the bank of the broad river. He was almost at its swiftly shelving bank before the lapping of the waves made him realise the impotency of all pursuit, and warned him of the dangers of further advance. Gazing into the darkness that swathed the turbulent river, and still incapable of concentrated thought, he exclaimed brokenly, "Kidnapped, kidnapped—oh, my God!"

It was long before power to think connectedly came, but, when it did, came the overwhelming conviction that he could place his hand on the one he believed had abducted her, and he resolved that he should restore her to him, even if it should be at the price of the shedding of blood.

As he retraced his steps back to the village he was distraught no longer, but quiet with the calm that a strong revengeful purpose ever begets.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RECKONING

"Haste me to know it, that I with wings as swift
As meditation, or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge."

"Vengeance to God alone belongs;
But, when I think on all my wrongs,
My blood is liquid flame."

CURÉ CINQ MARS had left Longueuil, and was once more in charge of old Bonsecours Church in Montreal. There was, perhaps, some peculiarity in the coincidence of his having left the quiet village to return to his old charge on the same day Giovanni had left the place with Severine for Ste. Anne de Beaupré.

The *curé* had quickly heard of the affliction that had overtaken the young girl, and saw in it a remarkable fulfilment of the statement he had made in his sermon, of retribution never failing to overtake all who ignored the commands of the priests and set at naught the Church's *mandements*. Not for a moment did it come to him to feel any regret at having been the instrument which had brought such disaster into two young lives—he had simply done what he deemed his duty to the Church. He had, in fact, been singularly honoured in so doing; for mental affliction was ever looked upon, by the faithful, as coming direct from Heaven—and Heaven had swiftly shown its displeasure towards one

of those whom he had not feared to publicly arraign.

One night, some two weeks after the preaching of the sermon, he was sitting in his comfortless study (the same in which Giovanni had so unfortunately sought him when desiring to be united to Severine), pondering over events connected with his sermon of that Sabbath morning. He was recalling certain marvellous comments he had heard at the striking affliction that had overtaken Severine, and the belief was strong upon him that this marked anger of Heaven against her whom he had cut off from communion with the Church would be cited the country over, by the *curés*, as a terrible lesson against disobedience. The thought caused an expression of pride to steal over his severe countenance—who could say what good might not come to the Church by his fearlessness and devotion to it? (The dormant self-interest in the man now with subtle strength assumed the mastery over him.) “And,” he continued to think, “what advancement, too, may not be in store for one who has served and brought increased dignity and strength to the Church, as I have striven to do?”

From the Church's glory his thoughts imperceptibly drifted to what some day might be his own, and presently, carried away by the vision of one advancement after another, soaring ambition ere long actually grasped the mitred hat, the crozier, and gorgeous vestments of a bishop.

Breaking ruthlessly in upon these ambitious dreams, and bringing home to him with unwelcome vividness his meagre surroundings, came a loud disturbing knock at the door.

With lowering brows at the interruption, and with

dissatisfied, sternly set lips, he rose and threw open the door.

The outer passage was very dark, and all he could see was an indistinct figure looming up.

"*Entrez*," he said shortly. He was very much annoyed at the interruption at such an hour, for it was after eleven. He was frequently called out at night to minister to the sick and dying, and thought this was about to be such a call. Although ever willing to subdue feelings of selfish ease and do his duty, the intrusion to-night strangely annoyed him.

As he stepped back from the door, Giovanni Correggio entered the room.

Curé Cinq Mars showed no surprise. "*Bien, Monsieur?*" he queried curtly, neither seating himself nor asking Giovanni to be seated.

Giovanni stood and looked at the priest. He had not met him since the preaching of the fateful sermon, and as he thought of the harm it had worked him and his, came the impulse to do bodily injury to the author of it. But realising the great need of self-control, he did not speak till, unbidden, he had taken a chair, and then he said meaningly, but with perfect calmness, "Curé Cinq Mars, I have just arrived by the late train from Ste. Anne de Beaupré."

Fixing his keen eyes on Giovanni's face, the priest, with a galling lack of any interest or surprise, repeated phlegmatically, "Monsieur has returned from Ste. Anne de Beaupré—ah."

Giovanni had looked for an expression of conscious guilt to come into the priest's face at the mention of the place, and the cool indifference of the reply disconcerted and further angered him. He did not doubt for a moment but that the priest

was acting a part. He had not patience for the further bandying of words, and, rising, he said, "Yes, *Monsieur le Curé*, I have just returned from Ste. Anne de Beaupré, where Monsieur has so lately been, and from where he abducted Madame Correggio night before last. I demand that she be restored to me at once."

The priest looked at Giovanni from under his heavy eyebrows and said, with curt impatience, "Monsieur speaks in riddles; I do not know what he means."

Believing in his inmost being that the man before him had taken Severine from the church, Giovanni scarcely succeeded in saying, with some degree of calmness, "In one who has acted as *Monsieur le Curé* has, it would be folly to look for frankness. What I demand is no riddle to Monsieur. Late night before last, Madame Correggio was abducted from Bonne Ste. Anne Church. No one but Monsieur—who, under the guise of zeal for the Church, has shown his bitter enmity to us both—could have any possible interest in her abduction. Monsieur has bitterly injured me; I would not quite lose all respect for the *soutane*, but the limit of human endurance in me has been reached. Surely revenge such as Monsieur's must have been amply glutted. Once more, and finally, where is Madame Correggio, Curé Cinq Mars?"

"Monsieur has come to the wrong place for the answer to such question."

Neither the warning tremor in Giovanni's voice nor the dangerous light in his eyes moved the inflexible priest, insignificant in stature though he was.

"Then Monsieur refuses to tell me where she is?"

The laboured tone of the question fully revealed to the priest the peril of his position, yet it did not unman him. In his soul he knew that the answer that was about to fall from his lips would make his peril still more imminent, yet he did not suppress it or seek to take away from it any of its sting.

"I was not in Ste. Anne de Beaupré yesterday," he said, meeting Giovanni's eyes, "nor do I know aught of the abduction of" (he made the slightest pause to emphasise his closing words)—"of—er—of—of *Mademoiselle* Severine d'Egmont."

Giovanni's control was all gone: the man before him, who had publicly proclaimed his marriage to be a mockery, had again stung him to frenzy, by speaking of her, who had suffered so much for him, as an unmarried woman—calling her once more by her maiden name.

The attack was so sudden that Curé Cinq Mars scarcely realised it: the walls of the room seemed suddenly to whirl around him; then came a dizzy sensation of being swung into mid-air; accompanying it, a ghastly choking sensation; and, finally, a dim consciousness that he was struggling desperately to escape the hands which so oppressed his throat.

Unexpectedly the pressure was released, and then opening his eyes, Curé Cinq Mars saw glaring into his the determined, vengeful ones of Giovanni. The priest's eyes wandered to the ceiling, and he realised he was pinioned across his desk. His captor was now holding him by the shoulders instead of by the throat.

"Hearken to me, Curé Cinq Mars!"

The priest lowered his eyes to those of the speaker's, and even now there was no quailing in them.

As they looked intently into each other's faces, Giovanni paused for a short space. When he spoke, his voice had that low, thrilling intensity which told better than any words of uncontrollable passion. "Hearken," he repeated, bending over the prostrate man, "life to me without Madame Correggio is not worth living; she must be restored to me. I am convinced you know of her whereabouts, and that for some reason you have hid her from me. Let me leave this place without crime: tell me where Madame Correggio is; refuse, and retribution shall come to you for the living death you have brought upon her. Curé Cinq Mars, where is Madame Correggio?"

Still upon Curé Cinq Mars' face there was no sign of faltering, although he was fully convinced that to deny, to the desperate man bending over him, any knowledge of Severine's abduction, would mean to him the end of all things. His reply did not come at once. Passing through his mind came a multitude of things, prominent among them the hopes and aspirations he had cherished of a great and glorious future. By prevarication he knew he could save his life; but prevarication meant both sin and cowardice—and he had ever relentlessly preached against such abominations. Whatever his ambitions, zeal for the truth and earnest striving after purity of life had ever dominated him. His decision was quickly taken. If the Ruler of all things was now pleased to demand of him the sacrifice of his life (it would be martyrdom!) for the principles he had vowed to preach, and had endeavoured to live, the sacrifice should be made.

His eyes had been closed and his brows furrowed with great seams while all these things had been passing through his mind, and while he had been

counting the cost. When he did look up, his eyes were radiant and his brow untroubled. But the face before him was revengeful and purposeful as ever.

Speaking slowly, on account of the painfulness of his position, Curé Cinq Mars said, "My past conduct Monsieur can view as he pleases; duty alone to the Church actuated it, and in my duty I glory. I have no regrets. My safety I know I could in a moment regain by saying I know where she whom Monsieur seeks could be found; such statement would be a direct falsehood; even at this moment I will not dishonour the Church for my own safety. I reiterate I have not been at Ste. Anne de Beaupré, and that I know nothing of the abduction of"—

Once more Giovanni's fingers were buried in the speaker's throat; but for a moment only: mastering the impulse for revenge had come a conviction which, despite his rage, unnerved his fingers; it was the conviction that the priest had told the truth, and that he really had not been in the church that night. Rising from the prostrate priest, he stood in dazed way looking down at him, as though he scarcely comprehended what had been happening.

Curé Cinq Mars rose painfully, but did not attempt to leave the room.

Giovanni paid no further heed to him, but stood looking aimlessly down at the floor. He was beginning to realise how near he had been to committing the greatest crime on which human and divine laws have set their ban. His eyes wandered to the door, and it came dimly to him to go to the street, where the air would be cool. The priest might not have been in the room for all the notice he paid him as he left it.

Even when he reached the street, the power to think connectedly did not come for many minutes. When he began to understand that even if the priest had been guilty, to have deprived him of life would have shut the door for ever to his again recovering Severine, he quickened his steps, that he might get far away from the church.

But if Curé Cinq Mars had not abducted Severine, who had? Almost instantaneously with the problem came the question to his mind. Was it possible that Monsieur d'Egmont, partially on account of his daughter's mental condition, and partially in the hope of saving further gossip about her and disgrace to his name, had taken this method of hiding her from the world?

Hurrying up one street and down another, Giovanni grappled with the question. His answer to it was finally in the affirmative—it must have been Monsieur d'Egmont, and not Curé Cinq Mars, who had entered the church during his absence and had taken possession of her. This conviction grew upon him so rapidly that he would have crossed the river immediately, and have gone to Longueuil and have demanded her whereabouts from her father, had not the ferry ceased running hours before. Feeling he could not go to Father Lacoste in his present highly strung mood and spend the night with him, he turned to seek an hotel where he could remain till the morning.

It was now long past midnight.

Upon securing a room, he made no attempt to retire, but walked the floor the long night through, frequently stopping to peer out of the window in search of the longed-for dawn. For the thousandth time he had assured himself that none other than her father could have had any interest in the abduc-

tion, when there came into his mind an idea that turned it into chaos again: it was the strange thought of the possibility of Friar Fontaine being connected with her disappearance. The distressing suspicion had suggested itself, as his mind had chanced to wander to the incidents attending the preaching of the sermon at Longueuil. He had been thinking of how Severine and he had left the empty church together, when Friar Fontaine's distorted face and figure loomed up before his mental vision, and again, plain as though he had seen him in the flesh, he beheld the friar stretch out his hands to Severine as they were about to drive away from the church, and saw yet once again the intense, imploring look the unhappy creature cast at her as he had besought her not to go away from him. The incident had had a peculiarly disturbing impression upon him at the time; but now, as he recalled it in the quiet of the night, and recalled, too, the many inexplicable actions of the strange being towards himself when he was at Ste. Anne de Beaupré, a startling suspicion beset him: could it be within the range of possibility that the friar's dogged devotion to his mistress had cloaked an affection monstrous beyond words? Had he secretly loved Severine from girlhood, and awoke to jealousy and desperation when he found another had come to woo the object of his awful affection? Such a theory made every action of the creature now clear as noon-day.

Who could say at what insane climax such a love would hesitate? Was it beyond the bounds of possibility that the friar had dogged Severine and himself to Ste. Anne, and watching with the cunning of the insane his opportunity, had with his great strength borne Severine from the church?

As all these sickening questions crowded down upon him, his mental agony became well-nigh unendurable. His longings for the hour when he could leave for Longueuil had been great before, but they were infinitely more so now.

CHAPTER XXII

THE REVEALING OF A CHERISHED HOPE

"Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts."

WHEN Father Lacoste had left Monsieur d'Egmont's house the Saturday night Curé Cinq Mars had unfolded in the library the illegality of the marriage between Severine and Giovanni, his pain and perplexity had been far greater than his outward demeanour had testified. In addition to his grief at the sorrow Giovanni had brought upon himself by his headstrong elopement, was a poignant distress over the events which had arisen and were preventing Giovanni's return to France—and the consequent completing of the few months' study that yet remained to him ere he could formally make his *début* before the world.

Although he had comforted Giovanni, when he had taken leave of him in the library, with the hope that the Archbishop would doubtless immediately consent to the Catholic Church solemnising a new marriage between them, he had had secret misgivings about the matter. It was not at all improbable he knew, that his Grace might decide to inquire personally into the facts of the case before he gave his consent; in such event, he dared not think what new complications might arise from such dangerous delay. To his profound relief, however, he had found the Archbishop in kindly mood the morning

he had visited him, and after hearing all, and to whom the young people were related, his Grace had given, under his seal, permission for the marriage to be made legal by their Church.

With the coveted document in his possession, Father Lacoste had returned, as he had promised, to Longueuil on the following Monday, only to find that the secret which had been revealed in the library, and which he hoped would be for ever hidden in a few hearts, was, owing to Curé Cinq Mars' sermon of the Sabbath previous, bandied about on every tongue, and to find also Severine in a state of excitement so ungovernable as to arouse the most profound fears for her reason.

He had stayed for days afterwards in the little hotel at Longueuil, hiding his own grief, and helping Giovanni to minister to Severine, and also seeking to comfort him with the assurance that presently she would fall into the coveted untroubled sleep that was to banish the spectre hovering over her. But the days wore on and the prayed-for rest did not come. The deepening cloud under which her mind wandered was her terror of the offended Church. Hourly her unbalanced mind magnified her offences against it. As she grew worse, her one prayer was to be taken to Bonne Ste. Anne. When ten days had passed, such was her state that the forlorn hope of a visit to the shrine was the only one left.

The day previous to Giovanni's departure with her for the place of miracles, Father Lacoste had left to return to Montreal, with a heart almost broken with despair for Giovanni's future.

The second day after Giovanni's arrival with his stricken charge at Ste. Anne, Father Lacoste had received a message from him saying Severine was

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lost, and that he would be in Montreal that night—the one mentioned in the last chapter, when Giovanni had gone for a reckoning with Curé Cinq Mars. It was now late in the afternoon of the following day. Father Lacoste still waited for him in the quaint old study in the presbytery of Notre Dame.

The priest had just risen to light the lamps, when Giovanni slowly entered and sank hopelessly into a chair.

Without speaking, the old man went to his side and laid his hand sadly on his shoulder. The simple act of unvoiced sympathy broke the tension that had so long held Giovanni, and, burying his face in his hands, he burst out: "Oh, *père*, *père*, she has gone, I have lost her! Oh, *mon Dieu*, I"—

"Giovanni, Giovanni, don't—don't give way like this, *mon garçon*," broke in the priest, in agitated way.

There was silence in the room for many minutes—one of those silences that strangely try men.

When Giovanni spoke again, he was apparently composed. He began, without preface, to relate to his listener the incidents in the church of Ste. Anne three nights before: of his finding of Severine in the church; of her disappearance from it when he had returned with the wraps; of how certain he had felt that it was her voice he had heard faintly mingling with the sound of the carriage wheels; of his return to Montreal the night previous; of his attack upon Curé Cinq Mars; and, finally, of his spending the previous night in the hotel, and of his longings for the present day, so that he might go to Longueuil and demand Severine's restora-

tion, either from Monsieur d'Egmont or Friar Fontaine.

"Demand Friar Fontaine to restore her?" queried Father Lacoste.

"Yes, demand her return from Friar Fontaine," was the reply, uttered in a peculiar tone.

The look of anxiety on Father Lacoste's face leaped into one of poignant fear—surely Giovanni's mind also was not beginning to wander! The priest strove to think of something to turn the conversation into some other channel, but, before he could do so, Giovanni began to tell of his visit that morning to Longueuil. "When I confronted Monsieur d'Egmont this morning," he began, "and demanded him to tell me of Severine's whereabouts, I saw a look of unpremeditated surprise mantle his face, despite all his pride and bitterness. He showed neither interest nor anger as he heard me unfold the many reasons I had for believing he was concerned in his daughter's disappearance. Long before I had finished, I knew from his demeanour that he was guiltless of her abduction.

"When I ceased, he made the brief statement once more, that, when his daughter disobeyed him and left her home, all his concern in her had ceased; of her abduction he knew nothing. My suspicions had been at fault again, and I left him without another word. I do not know, *père*, but I got the impression when I was speaking of how I had found her at midnight in the church, and of her sorrow and raving, that it was not altogether easy for him to crush down a dawning pity and remorse. He looked very tired and worn, and for her sake—she was always so proud of him—I could, had he not still been so stern, have again pled for reconciliation.

"The only hope now remaining to me was Friar Fontaine. Another time, *père*, I will tell you of something that I am almost positive is true concerning this deranged and deformed creature's strange attachment to Severine. It was his more than devotedness to her that led me to think he might have followed her to the church and spirited her from it. After leaving Monsieur d'Egmont, I came across the friar, at the back of his master's house, hovering restlessly near a large empty dog-kennel. Catching sight of me as I advanced towards him, he started back with a cry of astonishment and fury, and picked up an iron bar that lay near the kennel. I thought he was about to strike me with it; but his mood changed, and, dropping the bar, he stood before me wringing his hands. When I spoke to him, he sank to his knees, and, imploringly holding out his hands, asked me if I had brought Severine back again. Before I could reply, his manner became still wilder, and he began to rave about not hiding again in the grounds and watching her, of his never seeking to do me an injury, and of his missing her every day, and of his wandering at night in search of her.

"He was so terribly changed I scarcely knew him. His cheeks and temples had sunken so that he looked like an old man, while his great bodily strength had all but gone. His mental collapse was even greater than his physical; he could scarcely speak a dozen words connectedly. His one prayer, as he lay grovelling at my feet, was that I would promise to bring Severine back. I pityingly told him I would do so, and left him kneeling by the kennel whispering her name and heaving sobs such as I never heard a human being utter before.

"And so I have come back to you, *père*. I have

suspected wrongly each time, and know not now where to seek. I think now it must have been all a mistake, and that it was not her voice I had thought came faintly to me, mingling with the whirr of the carriage wheels, when I was seeking her in the church. *Père*, your mind is clearer than mine; for the Virgin's sake, try to think it all out for me, advise some way to find her." As he concluded, he made a restless movement as though he must rise and again go in search of her; but Father Lacoste's white furrowed hand, laid pleadingly on his arm, brought a sense of soothing, and he went on brokenly: "If it was not her voice I heard, *père*, I dare not think of what may have happened to her; the tide is so strong at Ste. Anne and has ebbed and flowed so often since I left in search of her." Springing to his feet, he went on restlessly: "*Père*, I must return without delay to Ste. Anne and look for her; it is there, I fear, I should have sought her first. You—you will come with me and help me in the search, *père*?"

"Yes, Giovanni, I will go with you."

Oh, the pain of heart which this simple consent brought to Giovanni! He had, after all, been hugging the hope that the priest would combat this new theory, and so relieve him of his fear of having blundered woefully in leaving Ste. Anne to seek her in a city hundreds of miles away. In the theory of the abduction there had been one great comfort—that she lived, and somewhere was being cared for. If she was under no one's care, what was there left for him to think? The tide at Ste. Anne was beginning to haunt him like a nightmare.

"Do not despair, Giovanni; she may yet be found."

"*Père*, it is awful to think of what may have happened."

"Still there is hope."

"But it is so slight, *père*; Ste. Anne is such a small place, and a message was to be sent me if she were found there, and none has come yet."

"In life, Giovanni, the unlikely and unhopd-for often occurs."

The young man shook his head hopelessly, and began to pace the floor.

The old priest watched him for a long time with a strange look of pity, hazarding at intervals reasons for hoping that perhaps she might be found at Ste. Anne.

Trying hard to take comfort from the words, Giovanni cast himself at the priest's feet, and broke out: "God grant your hopes may come true, *père*, and that we may find her." Suddenly grasping one of the priest's hands, he went on still more rapidly: "There is, *père*, in my breast, a hope concerning Severine that I have whispered to no one, and which intensely increases my anxiety to find her—it is, *père*, that I shall be able to cure her of her madness."

The old man looked sharply and fixedly down at the speaker, but made no response.

"This hope," continued Giovanni, "came to me when we both ministered to her at Longueuil, during the early days of her malady. It was brought about by watching the soothing effect my playing had upon her. This hope became a certainty with me the night I played to her in the church at Ste. Anne, and won her from a frenzy worse than I had ever seen her in before. I recalled that night, as I saw its effect upon her, the marvellous cures music had made in maladies such as hers, when I was studying music and its effects in Paris. When I left her in the church to bring her the wraps, I had made a

resolve to devote myself to her cure should it take a lifetime and"—

"Oh, Giovanni," interrupted the old priest, his voice ringing with pain and disappointment, "are you never again to give a thought to the career to which I have looked so anxiously forward for you all these years? I feel deeply for the great sorrow that has come to you, but I cannot bury for ever all my most cherished hopes. For my sake, Giovanni, do not let your mind be still more distracted with hopes which most likely can never be realised." The speaker's face was full of grief, and it touched Giovanni; but his belief in his power to cure Severine was still unchanged.

"I am deeply conscious, *père*," he answered sadly, "of all the pain I have given you, and would not bring you more, could I help it, by speaking of intentions and hopes that you deem little better, I know, than delusions; but I know my convictions in this matter are not wrong. Let me convince you, *père*, they are not visionary by reading a report I have recently received from L'Academie des Sciences, Paris, of recent cures affected by music—no better defence of the hope I hold could possibly be given."

Drawing a paper from his pocket, he read eagerly: "In the interests of humanity and science, L'Academie des Sciences, several years ago, began to study and collect all available material bearing upon the complex influence of music upon the human mind and animal organisms. The result of the statistics just gathered, coupled with the wide field of experiments conducted by the Academie, demonstrated the fact that the curative power of music upon certain classes of the mentally afflicted borders at times on the marvellous. How so valuable an adjunct in the treatment of the insane should only

at this late day be receiving any general recognition can but excite wonder. Research readily shows that among the most primitive nations the power of music, no matter how rude, to excite the emotions was recognised. The phenomena and effects of sound is perhaps of all the sciences the least understood. The inanimate as well as the animate is susceptible to its influence; for example, all are conscious of how pillar, pew, and almost every object in a church will vibrate and respond to the swelling tones of the organ. Tests have frequently shown that glasses and various articles can be broken by powerful sonorous music. We witness the effects, but can only conjecture at the causes. If, then, music can dominate the inanimate, and music have such an inexplicable influence over almost all animal life, it cannot excite wonder if its influence should be much more marked upon the intellectual and sensitive organism of man. As to the wide extent of the curative power of music in certain classes of mental afflictions, the following record of cures, conducted and tabulated by L'Academie des Sciences itself, gives a demonstration against which mere theory or argument can have no weight." Here Giovanni rapidly read a number of cures, many of them appearing nothing less than marvellous. The results attained were shown to be especially pleasing upon patients of highly sensitive temperaments and upon patients suffering from hysteria, melancholy, catalepsy, as well as those suffering with religious monomania.

As Giovanni returned the paper to his pocket, he said eagerly to the priest, "You cannot doubt now, *père*, but that I may be able to restore her to reason if I can but find her?" He did not wait for an answer, and continued: "You know she is peculiarly

influenced by my playing. I am sure that no temperament could be more susceptible to this mode of treatment than hers. From her childhood music has had a potent influence over her. You do not know it, *père*, but it was through music that she first learned to love me; it was music that first brought us together—you remember the Christmas Eve I played in Notre Dame. It was music that soothed away her madness at Longueuil and in the church at Ste. Anne, and if God gives her to me again, it is music, *père*, that shall win her back to the blessed light of reason."

The speaker's voice rang with enthusiasm.

Whatever might have been the expression of Father Lacoste's face as he had listened, Giovanni got no clue; for when he ceased and looked up at the priest, the old man turned very abruptly, and, going over to a pile of music, began turning it over as though looking for some particular piece.

Giovanni knew, though, by his action that he was moved with some very deep emotion—an emotion he tried in vain to understand—and so he waited patiently for him to speak.

"The train for Ste. Anne will leave, I think, in about an hour, Giovanni?" came the low query. He was still turning over the music as he spoke, and did not turn.

"Yes, in an hour, *père*," replied Giovanni quickly.

"Then, Giovanni, we have not much time to spare. I will meet you here in half an hour, and go with you, as I promised; we must not miss the train." As he concluded, he turned, in abrupt, troubled manner, from the room, his face still averted.

Had Giovanni been less deeply wrought about

Severine, he would have given far more serious thought to the unusual mannerism of the priest.

Sadly shaking his head, Giovanni left the room by another door, softly saying to himself, "God grant we may find her! If we do, the hopes he has so long cherished regarding my future shall be realised."

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE ACCUSATION

"Who by repentance is not satisfied,
Is not of heaven nor earth."

"The best of men are moulded out of faults."

IF the admiration and honour of men great in the world of art and the enthusiastic acclamations of the masses could bring forgetfulness of past griefs, they certainly should have done so to Giovanni, for the whole of music-loving Paris was doing him homage. Fortune, which had acted so long in wayward mood towards him, was now delighting to do him honour.

A year and a half had elapsed since he and Father Lacoste had gone to Ste. Anne de Beaupré to search for Severine. Of this time, a year had now been spent by him in Paris, where for six months the great Academie de Musique had been crowded nightly to hear him play. It was years since a violinist had won such popular favour—favour which the world still lavishes upon him.

The search for Severine at Ste. Anne had been attended by nought but suffering and disappointment. None of the villagers had seen her, nor could the slightest trace of her be found anywhere in the surrounding country. Giovanni had taken to haunting the treacherous river shore, watching the

furious tide as it came in and mournfully retreated, expecting to see it return on its bosom what he now believed it had taken from him. He had remained in the little village for weeks, his haggard face and sad mission known to every one of the villagers. Father Lacoste had stayed with him, hoping for the hour when he would realise how futile his search was, and return with him to Montreal. When, finally, Giovanni did consent to return, it was only after hours of reasoning and pleading. Back again in Montreal, Giovanni's unrest was but intensified, and at times he would disappear and be gone for days. The priest knew well what his destination had been, and would say to the unhappy wanderer upon his return, "The river, always the river, Giovanni. Why do you hope against hope?" Then he would plead with him to abandon the fascinating search, and to tone his mind by a change of scene—each time suggesting Paris. Six months, however, dragged their weary course before the pleadings of the priest bore fruit, and Giovanni left the shores of Canada for Paris to complete his musical studies. Had it not been for his sense of duty to Father Lacoste, to whom he owed so very much, years would have spun their course before ambition would have led him to devote himself to his art again.

He had given up all hope before he had left for Paris that she lived, and yet a letter never came to him now from Father Lacoste but he would hold it long before breaking the seal, wondering how he would bear it—should such a miracle occur—if it contained a hint that Severine possibly lived. The belief that he could have cured her of her madness was firmer than ever. If he could charm the masses who came nightly to listen to him,

could he not give peace to one loved, troubled mind?

This increased conviction in the power of music to cure mental afflictions was chiefly due to his having personally demonstrated its power upon the insane. To thoroughly satisfy his mind, he had, since his return to Paris, visited the Asile de la Salpetriere—one of the greatest asylums in the world—and had there played to patients who were deemed susceptible to this form of cure: in no one instance had he failed to wonderfully soothe; in many instances he knew the treatment, could he have persisted in it, would have resulted in permanent cure. In his letters to Father Lacoste he had often sadly dwelt upon these visits and their success.

He was sitting one morning in his rooms in Paris, after a brilliantly successful night, thinking how utterly inadequate all such glory was to give him peace, or for a moment to still his longings for one dear beautiful face and tender loving heart, when a letter from Father Lacoste was brought to him. As usual, he turned it over, in his temporising way, ever hoping against hope. It contained no news of her; he had not expected it would, and yet he was disappointed. The letter, as ever, was full of expressions of pride from the priest, in the world's increasing acclamations to one who had ever been as dear to the writer as a son. In conclusion were a few lines that gave Giovanni the most serious alarm. They read: "If it is possible for you, Giovanni, to come to Montreal soon and see me without injuring your prospects, I would dearly wish it; I have not been well for some time. My strength does not seem to be as great as formerly. I long so much to see you again."

Such was Giovanni's uneasiness at the tone of the letter, that a week later he had left Paris behind, and was *en route* once more for Montreal.

Giovanni found Father Lacoste much changed. Never before had the priest looked his age, but the past year seemed to have brought to him the burden of all his years. The grand old figure was not nearly as bravely erect and stalwart as of yore, but reduced and drooping sadly at the shoulders, while the lines of care had multiplied ruthlessly around the eyes and on the massive forehead, and struck out for themselves painful furrows down the now thin cheeks.

Either through weakness or emotion, Father Lacoste trembled so that he could scarcely rise to greet Giovanni upon his return once more to the loved room. With the delight of a mother, the childless old man held Giovanni—as he had done on one memorable occasion before—at arm's length, as he knelt with a cry of gladness at his feet, now looking proudly at the dark handsome face, so full of genius, and anon pressing the head with its clustering curls with passionate pride to his bosom. "And so my long prophecy has come true at last, Giovanni," broke out the old servant of the Lord, "and the world is at your feet, and you are great."

When Giovanni would have inquired as to the cause of the priest's illness, the old man had replied, in troubled, nervous way, "By and by you shall know, Giovanni; but now tell me all about yourself, of your art and of your triumph; my soul hungers for it."

And so Giovanni tried to tell him, putting an enthusiasm and interest in all he said (and how little he felt it), which made the thin face of the

priest flush with joy and the dim eyes to kindle with pride.

When Giovanni ceased, the priest in the fulness of his heart raised his eyes and said softly, with a beautiful smile wreathing his face, "Now, Lord, I am fully satisfied, and in Thy good time and pleasure I can lay down my work in peace."

Even as he uttered the word "peace," a shadow, denoting some sudden distressing recollection, crossed his face. Following it also came a look of palpable alarm and dread.

Seeing Giovanni had noted with concern the abrupt and peculiar change in his manner, the priest suddenly began to talk about the great asylum in Paris, asking Giovanni for further particulars of his playing to its inmates.

Much relieved, and ever ready to talk on this loved subject, Giovanni narrated instances of noted cures that had been effected there through the agency of music, and how musicians had now been permanently employed to play daily to a certain class of the patients. "Ah, *père*," he concluded longingly, "if Severine had but lived and I could have devoted myself to her cure!"

"I often wished," answered the priest, "when I read your letters, that I could have been with you and heard you playing to the afflicted of Heaven; and I made up my mind, Giovanni, to ask you, when you returned, to go with me and play to the afflicted in the Convent of the Holy Heart. I am not as sceptical now, Giovanni, as I used to be, as to the good music may do to the insane." Rising, and speaking in restless way, he continued quickly, "I am weary of this room, Giovanni. Let us go now to the convent, it is yet early in the afternoon. Only those with intermittent mental afflictions are

cared for there by the Sisters, and I feel it would do me good to see and hear you play to them."

He looked far from well and far from at ease, and Giovanni endeavoured to postpone the visit till another day, but every effort failed; the priest, with strange determination, rang for a carriage.

The Convent of the Holy Heart is situated in the east end, or French quarter, of Montreal, and is one of the most ancient and remarkable-looking structures in the province. Massive stone walls, stained with age, rise some eighteen or twenty feet from the ground and surround the entire convent, disclosing only its quaint roof and stone chimney. The convent was founded in the early days of Montreal. Since its erection thousands of nuns have passed their lives within its walls. In the earlier history of the convent the silent dark-robed Sisters, gliding along the gloomy corridors, never saw the outer world. Once they had passed through the heavy mailed doors and renounced the world—in the hope of more surely gaining eternal life—the renunciation had been for all time. For a few years back, however, it had been the custom of the Superioress to admit to the pious care of the Sisters a few female patients whose mental afflictions were of such a nature that the quiet and sanctity of the place were expected to cure them.

When Father Lacoste and Giovanni arrived at the convent, the Superioress admitted them without question, and led them to a large room, odd in shape and with ceiling unusually low. The walls were whitewashed, and the narrow windows heavily barred. The severity of the room was somewhat relieved by several pictures of saints—in frames a century old—and by a large wooden crucifix extend-

ing from the ceiling to the floor. The furniture of the room was of the rudest description. Although it was little more than midday, the room was lighted with tapers, the high outer walls almost shutting out the light. The room was a species of reception-chamber, and was apart from the convent proper.

When Giovanni and Father Lacoste had seated themselves, the Superioress, acting as though she knew the cause of their visit, withdrew, with the remark that she would prepare the patients for their entrance into the room.

Father Lacoste, who had seated himself quite a distance away from Giovanni, noting the somewhat perplexed look on the player's face at the nun's action, explained in a low voice, "I did not tell you, Giovanni, that I had mentioned this wish of mine as to your playing here to the Superioress a few days ago, upon receiving a letter from you, telling of the result of your playing to the patients in the Asile de la Salpetriere."

It struck Giovanni that the priest's face was unnaturally white, and he was about to inquire as to his health, when the sound of soft footfalls attracted his attention—the patients were entering the room. Stooping, Giovanni drew his violin from its case. It had so happened that Father Lacoste had singled out a seat for the player which turned his back to a small side door, but which gave him a full view of the bench against the wall where the patients were to sit.

The afflicted, some ten or twelve in number, came slowly into the room, in single file, headed by the Superioress, their hands crossed pathetically in front of them. Their costume was like that of the nuns. The whiteness of their restless faces was intensified

by their close-fitting black hoods, with their narrow inner lining of pure white linen. Giovanni raised his head and for an instant looked at the sufferers. Ah, how heart-breakingly they brought *her* memory back to him!

Bending quickly over his instrument to hide his emotion, he began to play, with all his great skill, a bright, hope-inspiring melody. So finely balanced and sympathetic was the player's temperament, that almost immediately he got the strange little band of listeners completely under control. The melody, with an almost imperceptible change of key, presently drifted into one of sparkling but subdued brightness, gradually affecting the listeners to feelings of exhilaration, hope, and happiness—emotions to which they had long been strangers. As Giovanni watched the transformation of their countenances, the conviction was strong upon him that, by repeatedly distracting and soothing their minds in such way, tone and strength would come, and, finally, banishment of the darkness enthralling them.

Silently Father Lacoste watched the wondrous effects of the music; the unrest and pallor of his face rapidly grew more noticeable.

Giovanni ceased playing for a space, and then the listeners turned brightly to each other and spoke in pleased, happy way.

In the interval, Father Lacoste, in an almost inaudible voice, asked Giovanni to play for him the refrain from his composition, *Nazareneus*.

As the request was made, the Superioress, unnoticed by Giovanni, left the room by the partially hidden side door.

And now, once more, was heard the soothing, fascinating strains, under whose influence Severine

had partially risen to her feet that memorable Christmas Eve, and when for the first time they had looked into each other's faces.

The vision of how he had that night looked down and seen her arose before him as he began to play the piece; but it soon vanished, and her image now came to him as he had found her in her madness in the church of Ste. Anne at midnight, when he had soothed away her fury with the very refrain he was now repeating. So crowded was the music with precious memories of her he had so madly loved and so tragically lost, that he remembered no longer where he was, and began to play with the same inspiration and abandon as when he had put to rout her frenzy in the church.

As thus he threw his whole soul into his art, and more vividly conjured up her image, the side door behind him silently and slowly opened, and there, with face flushed and gleaming with excitement, stood she whose memory and conjured-up image was inspiring him as he played.

With feet riveted to the floor, she stood drinking in the precious, well-remembered strains, her excitement dying gradually away, and a wholesome, happy light shining in her face. From where she stood she could not see the player's face.

She continued to listen till he chanced to slightly turn his head, revealing his profile to her. Then the spell was broken, and she would have called out his name and sped to his side had it not been for the restraining hand and whispered caution of the Superioress at her side.

Heeding the admonitions, Severine began to move slowly towards Giovanni, all the great and precious love she bore him glorifying her dear face.

His eyes were closed, as they were wont to be when enthralled with his art, or lost in thought of her, and so he was unaware of her presence, even when she halted at his side. For many moments she stood looking lovingly down at him, and then, sinking impulsively to her knees, she exclaimed softly, "Giovanni—I—I am here."

The violin fell from his hands as her voice faintly reached him above his playing. Opening his eyes, he saw the sweet face looking into his. His mind was not yet free from the domination of his art, and he was labouring under the idea that it was a vision he was looking upon. Unnumbered times he had conjured up her face before, but never as vividly as now. Reason told him it was beyond the range of possibility that she could be kneeling before him, in the twinkling of an eye, like this—and yet, the marvellous distinctness of the face! He sat looking, daring not to move. How gracious and beautiful she looked! and in the soft hazel eyes, too, was the blessed light of sanity! The unnatural lights and shadows of the room, caused by the towering walls, gave an unreality to the face it could not otherwise have had, and so made it still more easy for him to think that what he saw was an illusion of the senses.

Reading in his wide open eyes the pathetic dread that what he was looking upon might at any moment vanish as swiftly as it had come, tears of pity came to her eyes; but at the same time she was filled with an exquisite happiness at the thought of the joy the reality of her presence would bring to him.

Suddenly, as he looked, he held his breath. The dear loving face was drawing nearer to him, and—and—dear God! it was no vision: distinctly, as of

old, he felt the glorious head pressed restfully on his shoulder.

"Severine!"

An unlooked-for and startling thing happened as Giovanni called her name and folded her passionately to his heart—there was a gasping sound, and following it a heavy fall. Turning, Giovanni saw lying on the floor before them Father Lacoste, with countenance white as that of the dead. Kneeling by his side and holding up his head was the Superioress—she had just returned to the room, after taking from it the patients to whom Giovanni first had played.

As they caught sight of the priest, both Severine and Giovanni started towards him. Just as they knelt by his side, his eyes opened and looked into Severine's—she started to her feet with a cry of terror, trying with all her might to draw Giovanni away. In her eyes Giovanni saw again a light perilously near the borderland of insanity. He called her name, but she paid no attention to him.

Clasping his arm with increasing terror, she whispered, in fear-stricken voice, "Come, come away, Giovanni; I—I remember now; it all comes back to me: the night you left me in the church at Ste. Anne" (she pointed at the priest and tried still more wildly to draw him away) "it was he—he, Giovanni, who carried me from the church and took me away in the carriage—oh, come away, Giovanni, come!"

Her unreasoning terror and her wild charge against Father Lacoste all but killed in Giovanni the hope that had thrilled him of her reason being fully restored.

Again he tried to pacify her, but once more

she wildly prayed him to take her away from the room.

"Giovanni."

It was Father Lacoste's voice, tremulous and weak.

Turning, Giovanni saw the old priest's hands stretched beseechingly to him. He was seated now, and by his side was the Superioress.

"What Severine says," began the priest, as Giovanni turned, "is—the Virgin help me!—is true."

With an arm around Severine, Giovanni stood looking at the pleading, blanched face in unbelieving astonishment—astonishment which soon gave way to one of withering anger.

"You!—you took her from the church that night, Monsieur Lacoste,—you!" There was a hardness in the speaker's voice never heard by the priest before, and his weak outstretched hands fell hopelessly to his side.

Giovanni turned as though he would leave the room without another word.

"Giovanni, for the sake of all there has been between us, listen while I try and explain," cried the priest.

"It is right we should stay and hear him, Giovanni; think how very much we owe him." It was Severine speaking.

The quiet and saneness of her tone bewildered Giovanni. He turned and looked at her in astonishment; but a few minutes before, she had exhibited decided symptoms of insanity.

As he looked she understood, and said, "I have been recovering, Giovanni, for some time, and hope soon to be quite restored; but sometimes I—even yet I—I"—

In the relief at her almost complete restoration, it was not in his heart to refuse her anything, and as her halting words ceased, he let her know, in a loving undertone, that he understood all she would tell him. Then they both seated themselves, and waited for Father Lacoste to speak.

Turning his sad, troubled face to Giovanni, the priest began slowly, and without the slightest preface: "I took her away, Giovanni, because of my love and ambition for you. I thought it was best; her malady had developed so rapidly at Longueuil that I felt she could never recover. I could not bear that you should wreck your future, and in doing so sweep away the many hopes I had treasured regarding you since you were a boy. I finally determined to prevent you sacrificing yourself, and decided to try to separate you from her. You will recall that I left Longueuil the day before you took Severine to Ste. Anne. You thought my destination was Montreal, but I went straight to Ste. Anne. I was there when you arrived the following evening with Severine. My plan was to have one of the priests at Ste. Anne, whom I knew very well, impress upon Severine's mind that it was the will of Good Ste. Anne that she should retire to a convent, where she would be given health and the peace she so craved. Her mental condition was such that I was almost sure she would comply with the Church's bidding, with or without your consent. Her chance escape from her room and her journey to the church that night completely altered this plan. Late though it was, I was in the church when she entered; I had been unable to sleep, and had gone there to try and find composure. When I witnessed her wild ravings, especially before the picture of the lost in purgatory, I was then convinced, without a

shadow of a doubt, that reason could never be hers again, and I conceived a plan of instantly taking her out of your life.

"I hastened from the church, and at the presbytery got from the priest I have referred to a carriage, which I stationed with the driver, some little distance down the road from the edifice. When I returned again, I was surprised to see you had entered and were leading Severine down the aisle towards the door. I thought my plan had failed, and was going to turn from the church, when I saw you seat her in a pew near the door, after which you left the building. I glided after you, and, opening the door, saw your figure disappear in the direction of the presbytery. I then went over to Severine. When I spoke to her, she must have thought it was you, for she arose quietly and allowed me, without protest, to lead her towards the side entrance. When near the door, however, she caught sight of the statue and became violent. I knew you must soon return, and, picking her up, carried her out to the carriage. We drove straight to Quebec, and I placed her in an asylum there. You did not know, but I had only returned to Montreal a few hours, when you came to see me—after you had been to Curé Cinq Mars and charged him with her abduction, and after you had found out that neither Monsieur d'Egmont nor Friar Fontaine had been connected with her disappearance. When I listened to your sorrow over her loss, I had once all but resolved to tell you the truth and restore her to you; but the resolution came to nought when you branched upon the power of music to cure afflictions such as hers, and I heard your determination to devote all your life, if she were found, in trying to win her back to

reason. You will recall how I turned away when you ceased, and abruptly left the room, after telling you that we had no time to lose if we were to catch the train for Ste. Anne—where you desired to go and search for her. The reason of the futility of that search you now can understand.

"From the moment she was placed in the asylum I had her surrounded with every comfort. For your sake, I arranged to have music played to her every day. At last the time came when you left for Paris, but my thanksgiving was shadowed by the thought of Severine. It was months after you had left that she began to show signs of recovering. Her first lucid moment was noticed as she was listening to music. Gradually her intervals of reason, under this treatment, became more frequent. Your letters from Paris broke my heart, Giovanni; despite your fame, I knew you were an unhappy, weary man, and knew I was the cause of it. I began to brood over having spoiled your life after all, and having dealt wrongly, very wrongly, by you. Gradually my health began to fail, and with its wane conscience would be hushed no longer. I began to pray the Virgin for Severine's recovery. When her condition warranted it, I had her removed to this convent, where night and day I had her mind kept at rest and toned by music. Her recovery now became so rapid that I knew the time was drawing very near when I must send for you and confess all. The thought of this hour has been a cross, Giovanni, that has been hard to bear.

"At last I wrote you to come to me. I dared not hint in the letter of my greatest reason for so doing. Sister Ste. Therese, the Superioress, has known all for some time, and your meeting with Severine to-day has been anticipated for weeks. The

hope that she might soon see you was conveyed to Severine, as was also the news—which wonderfully helped her towards recovery—that the Archbishop had long ago consented to the Catholic Church solemnising and making legal her union with you. Another burden added to my conscience, for my conduct towards you, was the change in Monsieur d'Egmont. Some months ago we began to meet more frequently, and understand each other better, and then I found his heart was growing lonely and that remorse was haunting him. But I dared not tell him that she lived till I had sent for you and you knew all. Had my anxiety to atone not been so great, Giovanni, I should have waited longer before sending for you, as there are intervals—not very frequent, the Virgin be praised—when the darkness, even yet, comes over her. She has had no master in music such as you, Giovanni, to help her towards recovery, and so the hope is strong within me that under your care, and with playing such as yours, the dark moments will grow still more rare, until soon they vanish for ever.”

Slowly rising, he tremblingly stretched out his hands: “Giovanni—Severine!” he pleaded.

They went to his side without thought of hesitation.

It was a precious moment as they stood together, the past forgotten and forgiven—Father Lacoste broke completely down.

Later, when the three left the convent, Giovanni and Severine were man and wife, according to the ordinances of law and God; for Father Lacoste had brought with him to the convent the written permission of the Archbishop, allowing the marriage. Father Lacoste had married them himself, Sister Ste. Therese standing by Severine's side, as her

union with the man she so greatly loved received, after all her many sorrows, her own Church's blessing, and brought to her at last the ease of conscience she had so madly sought at the midnight hour in the church at Ste. Anne.

CHAPTER XXIV

TIME THE HEALER

"Gentle Time, thy gradual, healing hand
Hath stolen from sorrow's grasp the envenom'd dart."

BAPTISTE MONETTE had for some time been assuming airs of superiority towards Madame Picard, the housekeeper, and her ancient spouse, Delphis. It had become his habit to express, with marked condescension, pity for all who, no matter how lowly they might have been born, never had aspirations to better their positions in life. Following close upon such homilies always came covert hints of events that might soon happen to call certain persons (who had not been born without aspirations) to a much different plane in life to what they now occupied—a plane in which educated people would be very much in evidence.

Both Delphis and his wife drew shrewd guesses of what underlay all this mystery and change of manner in Baptiste, but they never directly questioned him about the matter. The wily dame, made restless, however, with the desire to know whether her suspicions were correct or not, often endangered Baptiste's secret—which he dared not yet reveal—by commenting most impressively upon the thankfulness that should dwell in the breasts of all who had been ushered into life with the germs of aspiration in their nature. It is doubtful if

Baptiste would much longer have been able to preserve his secret, owing to the many ingenious ambuscades Madame Picard set to learn it, if the seal of silence had not graciously been removed from his lips by the goddess who had closed them. The event happened in this wise.

Late one afternoon, some eighteen months after Severine's disappearance (the afternoon of the very day Giovanni had found Severine in the convent), Baptiste sidled into the kitchen of the old manor-house at Longueuil, and, after the most amusing fencing and attempts at coolness, triumphantly imparted the intelligence that he was shortly to be married, and was going to start business in the village. The lady who had consented to be his wife and raise him in the social plane (here the speaker looked straight and hard at old Delphis) was none other than Miss Katie Kimball, the waiting-maid.

Of course, as was but proper, Madame Picard was loud in her exclamations of surprise and profuse in congratulations. Delphis, however, said not a word, and sat drawing at his pipe in silence, as though the most ordinary thing in the world had occurred. Now, such treatment from the old man, who upon a multitude of occasions had said that Katie would surely jilt him, did not at all please Baptiste, and so, taking a seat, he began to talk "at" Delphis—his remarks of course, supposedly, being addressed to Madame Picard.

In patronising manner, the fortunate lover condoned the acidity so frequent in old age, and its inability to appreciate, under the most important circumstances, what a child could not fail to be instantly impressed with. Whilst Madame Picard was looking profoundly affected by these words of

wisdom, and bobbing profusely to them, Katie Kimball, as blithe and pert as ever, entered the kitchen. The instant Baptiste saw her, he started with alacrity to his feet and drew up a chair for her ladyship, who accepted it as condescendingly as would a queen from a subject. Baptiste hovered by her side, as convinced as ever that the light-hearted, domineering little thing was as superior to him in knowledge as the dean of a college was to a freshman.

For a time the trio (Delphis still sat apart and pulling stolidly at his pipe) talked over the great news Baptiste had with such importance announced. It is needless to say that Katie did not interrupt any of Madame Picard's solemn advice to Baptiste to use the utmost circumspection (the speaker's mind was now on the little grocery store) in the higher walk of life, which marrying a woman of education and becoming a man of business would transform him into at one sweep.

But as the afternoon waned, Madame Picard, as was often the motherly old body's custom, began, in the fading of the day, sorrowfully to speak of Severine, recalling her as she had been as a little child. With tears in her eyes, she again wondered what could have become of the afflicted girl after she had been left in the church at Ste. Anne by Giovanni the midnight of the Sabbath eighteen months ago.

As was always the case when they talked of Severine, Delphis began to mutter and whisper to himself of the evil that had come to the household through the bringing of the book accursed of God into it.

While they bemoaned the sorrows that had thus fallen upon their master and Mademoiselle Josephine, through the loss of Severine, Monsieur d'Egmont was

alone in a room—opening off the great library—in the upper part of the house, a room which now held the many objects of his preserving skill, objects which, two summers ago, he had been surrounded with at Ste. Anne de Beaupré, when Giovanni had taken the letter of introduction to him from Father Lacoste.

The light is now fading rapidly, and Monsieur is standing close to the window, in his hand a bird which he had been stuffing. From his position, and manner of holding the specimen, it would be thought he is very earnestly examining it, but in truth he is not; he is lost in a train of thought that has all but taken away the fascination which the art of taxidermy once had. With a weary sigh, he presently laid down the specimen, and stood looking blankly out of the window, recalling, as he was now so often wont to do, memories of the happy years of Severine's girlhood in the old homestead; recalling how proud he had been of her; recalling his furious anger against her, when he had learned of her affection for Giovanni; recalling her flight from home and of his resolve never to pardon her, and recalling, too, her madness and great suffering. With a shudder, his thoughts, from which he tried in vain to escape, turned to Ste. Anne de Beaupré, and tortured him with what must have been the fate of his daughter after she had left the church that woeful Sabbath night. Plainly, as though he had been looking upon reality, he saw her now, in fancy, stumbling along the uneven country road—her beautiful hair loose and a sport for the wind—towards the precipitous bank of the dangerous river; saw her, at last, reach the bank; saw her hesitate for a moment, and with the wistful expression he remembered so well, look out across

the broad black waste of riotous waters; saw her then take a step forward, innocently as a child; saw the small white hands clutching at the air; heard the awful splash, and stifled gurgling cry, which the noise of the outgoing tide soon swallowed up; saw the white, agonised face flash for an instant out to him from the black seething waters; then saw the hungry flood rise and for ever—

“Oh, dear God!—dear God!”

The cry of remorse had broken from him as he had pressed his hands to his eyes to shut out these dreadful fancies. To-day, the love of the father had mastered the inordinate pride of birth that had so ruled him, and there was nothing now he would not have done to undo the harshness which had had so much to do with the woe which had come to him. As he stood, in his agony, he could have cursed *Curé Cinq Mars* for the merciless part he had played in her punishment—a punishment which could never have been hers, however, had he himself not driven her from home with his severity.

And thus he stood in the darkening room, lonely, remorseful—almost wishing relief from the pain of living.

The unusual sound of raised voices in the lower part of the house somewhat distracted his thoughts. In a vague way he was speculating what could have caused the commotion, when there came a knock at the door. As it was about the time *Baptiste* generally came to light the lamps, he did not turn. He heard the door open, and heard the sound of footsteps in the room. They were not those of *Baptiste*, and, turning, he saw *Father Lacoste* before him. He held out his hand to the priest with feverish gladness. “I am so glad to see you to-day,” he broke out; “sometimes my thoughts are more than I can bear, and—and I”—

He stopped and looked into the priest's face, which was working with the strangest expressions.

The priest made an effort to speak, but no words came.

Alarmed, Monsieur was about to inquire if he were ill, when Father Lacoste said, in a voice of deep agitation, "I am somewhat unnerved, Monsieur, that is all. I—I—there is something I have to tell Monsieur." Looking away from his listener, he went on in the same abrupt way: "It is said, Monsieur, that a great joy is sometimes harder to bear than a great sorrow." Ceasing again, he looked at Monsieur d'Egmont, whose eyes were fixed upon him with a wondering and startled expression.

Unable in his excitement and weakness to endeavour any longer to break his great news gently, he grasped Monsieur d'Egmont's arm, and went on rapidly: "Would a joy, Monsieur, a great joy, a joy that would bring more happiness to you than anything else in the world, be greater than you could bear?"

"Père—Père Lacoste!" ejaculated his listener.

"A joy," hurried on the priest, with still greater excitement, "that would mean for you, as it does for me, opportunities for redeeming acts of the past over which we have sorrowed. A joy, Monsieur"—

"For the love of heaven, Père Lacoste!" Monsieur d'Egmont caught the priest with both hands, his breath coming quickly.

"Then she lives!—lives, Monsieur. Even at this moment she is in the house. She has been listening to us. Turn—see!"

Monsieur d'Egmont's back had been to the door, and he had not seen it quietly open. Scarcely had he had time to spring round when Severine's dear

arms were twined about his neck and her beautiful face pressed against his own.

He stood for a space quite dazed, and then—then he drew her to his heart as he used to do when she was a child.

Father Lacoste stole from the room.

They sat side by side talking so long, and the night fell so rapidly, that soon they could scarcely see each other's faces. She told him all about that night in the church—as it had come back to her afterwards—and revealed to him who it was who had abducted her from the edifice, pleading earnestly for Father Lacoste, and finding excuse for his wrong in his years of loving devotion to Giovanni.

It was not easy for Monsieur d'Egmont, even in the happiness of possessing her again, to grant her request; but he did at last—after all, he owed much to the priest; it was through him alone the young people had that day been made man and wife, according to the laws of the land and the Church.

She lit the lamps, and the room was quite bright and cheerful, before she began to tell him what, sooner or later, she knew he must know. Nestling at his feet, she broke to him, as only a tender, compassionate woman could, just what was her present mental condition, making light of the occasional clouds that yet came and staggered reason, so that his regrets might not be so poignant. She assured him that with the removal of the displeasure of the Church, with his forgiveness, and under the wondrous healing influence of Giovanni's playing, the occasional clouds would soon depart, never to return.

He was very much shocked and surprised. He had thought from her manner and conversation that

she must have thoroughly recovered. As he listened all he could do was to press his lips to the sunny hair and in choked voice keep murmuring her name.

While the depths of their natures were thus stirred, Giovanni and Father Lacoste entered and stood before them. Monsieur d'Egmont looked up at Giovanni, and after an almost imperceptible hesitation, held out his hand.

Their hands met in silent, subtle understanding. Each read in the other's eyes the unvoiced desire for the burying for ever of past errors and past bitternesses—faults which the chastening influence of a great sorrow would make them superior to in the future.

In like silent manner and like silent understanding did Monsieur d'Egmont's hand reach out and clasp that of Father Lacoste's.

During the quiet and impressive scene the door had opened, and Mademoiselle Josephine d'Egmont (Severine had seen her before going to her father's room) had entered. She had lovingly taken Severine in her arms, stroking her hair and talking to her as would a delighted mother. When Giovanni drew near, she impulsively joined Severine's hand and his together.

For some time the whisper of voices had been heard in the passage, and, going to the door, Severine opened it—there, confronting her in the passage, stood our worthy friend Baptiste, Katie Kimball, Madame Picard, and old Delphis. The news of her arrival had been taken to the others by Baptiste—who had opened the door for her, but who, thinking he was surely looking upon an apparition in the dusk of the evening, had decamped with legs that shook like reeds in the wind, without having had

the grace to wish the visitors welcome. It was the exclamations at this news of Baptiste's that had aroused Monsieur d'Egmont in his study. So astounding was the news of her return, indeed, to the other servants, that they could not have credited it, had not Father Lacoste, who was with Severine and Giovanni, vouched for Baptiste's veracity. The additional news from the priest, too, that the Catholic Church had legalised the marriage between Severine and Giovanni, was the cause of the most profound relief to them all.

As Severine now confronted them in the passage, such was their delight that they could but stand and gaze at her. Whatever their limitations, they were all loving-hearted, kindly folk, and the welcome and affection in their countenances could not but keenly affect Severine. She made them come into the room for a few minutes, and found something to say to each in turn.

Baptiste, it is regretted to say, hurried away with decidedly unpolite haste when the time for leaving came. But the reader will not think too severely of him for this, when it is explained that his ancient enemy the hated skeleton had been transferred to this room. From the moment they had entered, Baptiste had kept a wary gaze on the fleshless and still jocular-looking object, of whose undue friendly propensities he had still a vivid horror.

It would be very much remiss were it not recorded that Severine's unexpected return greatly increased old Delphis' fame in the household as a prophet; for it had so happened that the dread book of mythology, from whose entrance into the house at Ste. Anne he had prophesied such evil, had that very day been taken away by a gentleman who had gone to Quebec—thus proving to

Delphis' satisfaction that its evil influence over the house departed the self-same day it was taken from it. That night honest Delphis solemnly thanked the saints for the passing from the place of such a firebrand.

When the servants had gone, Severine remembered she had not seen Friar Fontaine, who was ever wont to be with her father in his workshop, and asked for him.

Before replying, Monsieur d'Egmont went to a drawer, drew from it a small package, and handing it to her, said, "Friar Fontaine is dead, Severine. He died over a year ago, in an asylum, violently insane. On the day of his death some glimmer of reason came to him, and he gave to the warden of the asylum this package, asking that it be delivered to me, and that you, and you alone, should open it, should you ever return."

As Severine silently took the soiled package, Monsieur d'Egmont looked thoughtfully down and said, "Poor Jean, poor Jean Fontaine! He was always weak-minded, but I never expected he would die hopelessly insane." Looking up at Severine, he continued, in the same pondering tone, "It was a little peculiar, but his affliction took an acute form, Severine, after you left us."

As he turned away he did not notice the agitated look which had flashed into Severine's face at the mention of the death of this strange being.

But Father Lacoste had noticed her agitation, and fearing that the many excitements of the day were beginning to tell too severely upon her—and feeling that she would likely regain her composure if left alone with Giovanni—he managed, after a few minutes, to inveigle Monsieur d'Egmont and Made-moiselle Josephine out of the room for a short time.

Scarcely were they gone, than Severine turned quickly to Giovanni, and in a tone of excitement, which made him start with apprehension, said, "Poor unhappy Friar Fontaine is dead, Giovanni."

Having heard her father's words, as he had handed her the letters, and having an impression that, somehow, it would not be wise for her to open them in her present state, Giovanni said soothingly, as he held out his hand for the package, "Do not mind opening it to-night, Severine; wait till to-morrow."

She paid no attention to his words, and with increasing excitement tore the cover from the package. As she did so, she caught her breath and started back: staring at her from the package was the memorable soiled photograph of herself which the dead madman had kissed when he had grovelled at her feet in the hotel at Longueuil. With the photograph were some scraps of paper, on which she saw written mad words of love for herself, and wild prayers for her to return home, as he could not live without seeing her face.

The sight of the photograph brought back all but too vividly recollections of the night in the hotel, when unnerved by her father's refusal to give her his pardon, by Curé Cinq Mars' threatenings in the library, and her encounter with the mastiff, Pataud, the friar had rushed into the room, and, with bloody knife in hand, had betrayed to her the monstrous love which he could no longer hide.

The memories of the dread night, coupled with the many excitements of the day, were overcoming her, and realising that the old terror, from whose domination she was not yet entirely free, was overwhelming her once more, she twined her arms about Giovanni, calling upon him in frightened voice to save her.

Striving to hide his grief, Giovanni tried to pacify her and distract her thoughts to some other subject. It was bitterness to him to see the desperate efforts she made to fight back the blackness, and recover, and to see it, nevertheless, surely mastering her. Soon the struggle was abandoned, and she was clinging to him in an abandon of heart-breaking fear, and telling him, in horrified tones, of a blood-stained knife which Friar Fontaine was holding. "He hates you so, Giovanni," she cried fearfully, "and I know he will murder you some day. It was he who made the mastiff spring at us; he intended it should tear you, not me. Take me away from the hotel, Giovanni. He will return soon again, I am sure."

Giovanni thought her words but wild imaginings. It will be remembered that when he returned to the hotel, after the friar had fled from it, leaving Severine in a swoon on the floor, she had felt too ill to tell him of what had happened, and had postponed the telling till the next day. The following day, however, had brought the fateful sermon by Curé Cinq Mars, annulling her marriage and making her an outcast from society. This last great shock, following so close upon the many others, had been more than her reason could bear. Thus Giovanni had heard nothing until now of her scene with the friar.

Realising that it would be useless with words to try and pacify her, Giovanni rang for a servant.

When Katie Kimball answered the summons, Giovanni was standing at the door and holding Severine in a manner so that she could not see into the room,—he could not bear that any of the servants should see her thus,—and instructed Katie to bring him quickly the violin Severine had been accustomed to play upon.

When Katie returned with the instrument, he was still standing in the same position at the door. One reassuring arm had been behind him and around Severine all the time.

Closing the door, and drawing Severine farther into the room, he stood by her side, and broke in upon her wanderings with the old soothing melody from *Nazarenus*, which had calmed her fury in the church at Ste. Anne.

He had not been playing many minutes when he saw, to his distress, the door open and disclose Monsieur d'Egmont and Father Lacoste. The former was looking at them wonderingly. Severine glanced quickly towards them with troubled, frightened eyes, but did not speak.

Seeing how ill she looked, Monsieur d'Egmont was in the act of going over to her, when Giovanni cast an appealing look at Father Lacoste. The priest understood, and laying his hand on Monsieur d'Egmont's arm, whispered in his ear.

A smothered exclamation escaped him as he sank to a chair and watched Giovanni with bated breath. Father Lacoste stood behind him, equally burdened and anxious.

At this trying time Giovanni's great gift of concentration stood him well, and soon he was playing with all the abandon and wondrous sympathetic feeling so strikingly characteristic of all his work.

The tribute to his genius came with no laggard steps: ere long the cloud upon the troubled face began to fade, and there returned to it the inestimable light of dawning reason.

As Monsieur d'Egmont watched the effect of Giovanni's playing, his relief was such, that more than once he would have given vent to it in words had it not been for the watchful care of Father

Lacoste—the old priest fully realised the danger of any sudden interruption at such a crucial time.

Soon Severine's hands, which had been hidden with fear that was characteristic of her, in her hair, began slowly to droop, and presently they were lying with placid content in her lap.

Giovanni was playing passionately on, his head lowered as was his wont. She looked tenderly at him for the briefest space, and then touching his hair with her lips, said, "It has gone, Giovanni—the blackness; you have driven it away again."

Looking into her face, he answered with vibrating voice, "The day is not far distant, Severine, when I shall drive it away never to return."

"That I believe, dear," she answered, the light of a great hope in her face.

As the two men saw their happiness, and thought of the grievous trials they had endured, there came into their eyes the sympathetic moisture that did their years no dishonour.

The ordeal she had gone through, and the anxious gladness of her father, made Severine feel the need of quiet for a time, and she withdrew, leaving the three men alone.

When she had been stricken again, Giovanni's thoughts had been busy with the memory of the man whom he could never forget, and scarcely had she left the room than he turned to Father Lacoste, and, with darkening anger said, "And Curé Cinq Mars, *père*, what of him? Has prosperity followed his steps?" Without waiting for a reply, he continued bitterly: "When I saw the cloud coming over her once more, there came to me the memory of the sermon he had preached, and I felt I could have gone to the uttermost parts of the

earth and have brought him back to see the result of his pitiless handiwork."

Looking past Giovanni, the old priest said slowly, "Prosperity, no, prosperity has not attended Curé Cinq Mars." Then turning his noble furrowed face to Giovanni, he went on earnestly: "It is right I should say, that whatever were Curé Cinq Mars' failings, he was a sincere, self-denying man, and ever acted as he considered would be for the best interests of the Church. While I know your anger and bitterness is very human, and that you have great cause for both, I have never doubted but that Curé Cinq Mars' chief motive in acting towards you as he did was to enhance the prestige and glory of our religion. The morning you chanced to go to him in the old Bonsecours Church with Severine, I knew he was sorely tried over the manner in which the *mandements* of the bishops in regard to the elections had been ignored by the faithful of this province. His ideas of obedience to the Church were most strict, and so when you disobeyed him, after he had refused to marry you, he must have deemed the time had come when some striking example of the Catholic Church's power in this country must be made—hence the preaching of his unhappy sermon. Nevertheless, with all his devotion to our faith, he was a strangely ambitious man—more ambitious, I have often thought, than he himself was aware of. Instead of gaining advancement and power, he has had to submit to taking a still humbler walk in life. He has been removed from the pastorate of Bonsecours Church in Montreal, and is now stationed in the scattered little parish of St. Pascal. Life and fame are before you, Giovanni, and you can afford not to rejoice in the humiliation of a man who met his downfall on

account of his action towards Severine and yourself. This is how his humiliation occurred. When Severine lost her reason, after the preaching of the sermon, the daily papers devoted much space to her case. The Archbishop was very much annoyed; he felt that before Curé Cinq Mars had taken such drastic measures on the old marriage law, he should have first consulted him. After a long interview with Curé Cinq Mars, the Archbishop removed him to the small and unimportant parish I have mentioned."

Giovanni was not of an implacable disposition, and when Father Lacoste ceased he said, "As you say, *père*, it is only natural that at times I should feel bitter towards Curé Cinq Mars, and yet at this moment I feel no triumph over his downfall. You knew him better than I did, and the course he pursued towards us may have been prompted by more conscientious motives than I thought of giving him credit for."

While he was speaking, Severine returned. Although pale, she looked composed and happy.

As Giovanni turned to her, Father Lacoste drew Monsieur d'Egmont to the other end of the room, on the plea of wanting to inspect some of Monsieur's specimens.

There was something that had been perplexing Giovanni, and, after talking a few minutes to Severine, he abruptly turned the conversation, and said, "In the dark mood which just came over you, Severine, you uttered strange words about Friar Fontaine; they keep recurring to me—did he really attempt to kill me?"

"Yes, Giovanni," she answered, with deep womanly pity for the poor being whose only happiness had been the sight of herself, "he attempted to kill you.

He came to the hotel that night after Pataud had sprung at us; when you returned, you found me in a swoon. He told me he had hated you from the day you had come to our house at Ste. Anne; he said your face was a curse to him, and in his madness declared you had stolen me. He confessed he had often vowed to kill you. It was he who made Pataud spring at us; it was you he wanted to kill. When he drew a knife clotted with blood, I thought he had encountered you, after you had left me in the hotel, and had murdered you. It was then I swooned."

"It was only after you were lost," said Giovanni slowly, "that a suspicion of what might have been his feelings towards you occurred to me. The suspicion was all but turned into certainty the day I sought him in the hope of getting news of your whereabouts. Now I understand everything; and who would ever have dreamed, Severine, of love entering into the life of such a one as Friar Fontaine?"

"Poor demented Jean!" said Severine pityingly.

While speaking, Severine had been absently turning over some of the soiled notes and letters the friar had addressed to her, and which she had not yet thought of reading. But now certain words scrawled on one of the letters attracted her attention, and taking it up, she read it aloud. It revealed an incident that neither of them had ever guessed, and which might have separated them for ever; it also threw a new and nobler light on the friar's character. The epistle bore no address. It began very abruptly, and read: "She would not come back to life. I promised her anything, anything if she would. I saw she was lying dead at my feet. She was so beautiful even then. I went

mad; it was the fear of me that had killed her. Oh that I had not gone to the hotel! I could not bring her back to life again, and I swore over her body that I would never more attempt to injure him she had loved. If her spirit heard me, I knew it would please her. My brain was on fire, and I ran out of the hotel and down the road. I heard footsteps coming towards me. I hid by the roadside in the dark. I saw him just as he was passing me. Virgin, it was he. The knife I had killed Pataud with was in my hand. I crept after him. I was going to strike, when the promise I had made her spirit came to me. He passed out of my power, and never knew."

There was deep pity in Severine's voice as she ceased reading.

Silently Giovanni tied up the frayed notes and letters, and then said softly, "He must have striven hard, Severine, to keep his secret from Monsieur d'Egmont, and it shall remain with us, and us alone."

"Yes, for his sake, Giovanni, papa shall never know."

Hearing her father now call her name, Severine turned from Giovanni.

As she did so, Father Lacoste, who had been watching Giovanni for some time, as though desiring to speak to him, stepped up and touched him upon the shoulder. The truth was, there had been something on the priest's mind which he had wanted to communicate to Giovanni ever since they had left the convent.

As Giovanni turned, the priest said, "Something occurred, just as we were leaving the convent, which is most important, and which I have not before had an opportunity of apprising you of. It is this. As

I was leaving the convent, Sister Ste. Therese whispered it was the opinion of the physician who had been attending Severine—such was the peculiarity of her temperament and malady—that if at the expiration of six months the attacks (which have been dying away so rapidly) had not ceased altogether, he had little hopes of her ever being thoroughly restored. The attacks after that period, whether frequent or not, would have become chronic. I know, Giovanni, you are sanguine, and you have right to have strong hopes, from the strides she has made towards recovery; but, apart from this fact, do you think the influence of your playing will be such that she will be completely cured before the expiration of this period?"

"I have the most firm conviction, *père*, that before that time, mentally, she will be as strong as she ever was. I shall be always with her, and so, able to banish any attacks upon their approach—thus they will quickly lose their control over her."

"I believe in my heart, Giovanni, your expectations will be realised. One thing more: there is your art; although you are famous now, you will not neglect it too long?—you know what is still my pride in you."

"So soon as she is cured I shall go before the public again. You will see the delay will not be long."

"Although your marriage is now legal, you will not, of course, remain here long; you know the peculiarities of the people and how their curiosity would distress her."

"I shall leave for France in a few days, *père*."

"And I, Giovanni, shall anxiously wait for the good news of her complete recovery."

They were speaking a little loudly now, and some

of their words had fallen upon the ears of Monsieur d'Egmont, who was just passing with Severine and Josephine—the latter having returned to the room.

Halting with the ladies before Father Lacoste and Giovanni, Monsieur d'Egmont said happily, "I demand to be taken into your confidence; I know you are talking about my daughter."

Knowing the pain it would give him if he should be told that the chances of her absolute recovery were small, if not accomplished within the space of six short months, Giovanni replied, as he slipped his arm around his wife, "Oh, we were just saying, that from the rapid strides Severine had made towards entire recovery, long before six months have expired she will be fully restored."

Looking lovingly into the speaker's face, Severine said, "If you had limited the time to one day, Giovanni, I should not dream of doubting it."

"Thank God your complete recovery is so certain, Severine," said her father.

The ladies' attention was now asked to a new specimen that Monsieur d'Egmont had recently received, and, as they turned away, Giovanni said in a low voice to Father Lacoste, "Heaven grant me the fulfilment of my hopes, *père!*"

"Amen," whispered the priest, his eyes following Severine.

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